From Prudence to Romance: Some Aspects of Jane Austen's Evolving Views of Nature and Society.

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FROM PRUDENCE TO ROMANCE:

SOME ASPECTS OF JANE AUSTEN'S EVOLVING VIEWS OF NATURE AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Jane Austen's abiding theme is human nature, and her principal concern the way in which human beings can control and shape their moral characters and their personal destinies. In her first four novels she uses material nature as a metaphor for human nature, a metaphor derived from a belief that both are imperfect and require constant attention, amendment and cultivation. Her exploration of the value of social forms and social institutions is connected with the idea of man's being capable of both improvement and degeneration. Jane Austen considers the power of social forms, which compose the matrix of the class she writes about, and the power of social institutions, which compose the matrix of the society of which that class is but a part.

This study is arranged to imply an evolution in Jane Austen's views of nature and society. Her novels reflect a movement from a view of nature as a metaphor for human nature to an expansion of that view to include the haphazard forces of nature, imaged in the weather and the sea. These are the forces over which man exerts little or no control, cannot finally amend, but which have great influence in the shaping of his destiny. As Jane Austen moves towards this wider view of nature, her conception of social forms as being of considerable value to the individual in his attempt to maintain his moral probity, shifts to a greater emphasis on the value of social institutions as providing such support.

Jane Austen is not inconsistent in her opinions and values; the changes and refinements in her vision are principally a matter of extending existing views and of shifting emphasis. Such changes are especially apparent when one examines the six novels

as a body of work rather than as six distinctly separate works. Ironically, such an examination often yields a greater sense of variety than is commonly supposed to exist among Jane Austen's novels.

REFERENCES

References to the text of Jane Austen's work are from The Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen, ed. R.W. Chapman, vols. I-V, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1932-34); vol. VI, 1st ed., reprinted with revisions by B.C. Southam (Oxford, 1969); and from Jane Austen's Letters, ed. R.W. Chapman, 2nd ed., corrected reprint (Oxford, 1959).

References to these works are followed by the abbreviated title of the work and by the page number. The usual abbreviations have been used:

NA The Northanger Abbey

SS Sense and Sensibility

PP Pride and Prejudice

E Emma

P Persuasion

MW Minor Works

L Jane Austen's Letters

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Introduction

> 'Here I am, you see, staring at a picture.... But what a thing here is, by way of a boat. Do look at it. Did you ever see the like? What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think that any body would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell as that. And yet, here are two gentlemen stuck up in it mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and mountains, as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they certainly must be. I wonder where that boat was built! ... I would not venture over a horsepond in it' (P 169).

The speaker is Admiral Croft, a man to whom one might not generally give complete credence as an authority on art. But it seems to me that here the Admiral knows whereof he speaks. His opinion, with its implicit comment on the importance of the accurate imaging of form and the truthful consideration of the operation of the laws of nature, expresses Jane Austen's view of some of the essential requirements of the realistic novel.

Our confidence in the Admiral's judgment lies not, of course, in his authority as an aesthetician, but in his knowledge of what is imaged in the painting, particularly the ship and the sea. He does not presume to comment on the more technical aspects of the picture - composition, brushwork, colour; he judges the work as a reflection of the real world, as an image of the world he inhabits and understands. The Admiral bases his opinion on his perception of three different kinds of form: ideal form (his standard of a sound vessel); real form (boats and seas that he has seen, sailed in, and sailed on); and images of real forms (the artist's rendering of boats and seas). He considers the painting absurd because he perceives a meaning the painter obviously did not intend: the boat is about to sink.

We are able consequently to deduce two possible reasons for the artist's failure. Either the boat was actually seaworthy,

though not shown to be so (the artist's failure to image the real form accurately), or the sea is devoid of natural power (the artist's failure to account for the operation of the laws of nature). Whatever the fault, the artist does not image truthfully the real world. His work attracts the comic ridicule of Admiral Croft, just as so many novels were for similar reasons the objects of Jane Austen's ridicule. Such responses, so completely different from what the artists intend, stress the importance of both the proper representation of real forms and the accurate accounting for the laws of nature. A failure of either sort destroys the harmony that in realistic art ought to exist between the images and the meaning the artist expects them to convey.

The most immediately perceptible truth in a realistic work of art lies then in the accuracy with which the artist images real forms. Had the painter depicted a sound vessel, the question of the laws of nature would not have come into question, except in a special circumstance, the depiction of a violent storm at sea, for example. Jane Austen gave her attention first to imaging forms as they function outside the more violent and haphazard forces of nature. The parodic elements of Northanger Abbey and Sanditon explore two of the major problems arising from the attempt to reflect the real world. In Northanger Abbey Jane Austen takes a careful and just measure of the truthfulness of images (both of human nature and of situations) found in the Gothic novel and examines the dangers these images present to the middle-class English reader's clear comprehension of ordinary life. In Sanditon the problem is not one of truthfulness, of accurately reflecting either form or the laws of nature, but of selecting forms suitable for representation. She considers the dangers of reflecting certain forms, however realistically the artist might

succeed in imaging those forms.

Jane Austen recognized the characters in Gothic novels as human beings in the same way that the Admiral recognizes the cockleshell in the painting as a boat.[1] She finds it about as unlikely that one would meet with such creatures in Bath, as the Admiral that he would find such a ship upon the sea. She suggests that human nature is neither so wholly good nor so wholly evil as these novels might lead the reader to believe, and she takes some of the situations of these novels and gives them their own peculiarly English forms. Jane Austen perceived that distorted images have the power to distort the reader's expectations and comprehension of the real world, not just in a single way, but in antithetical ways. Not only does Northanger Abbey show how one obscures the real world by seeking to find in it those forms imaged in the Gothic novel, but shows the even more subtle danger of rejecting such novels as containing images bearing no resemblance to real people, real situations. In both instances one is liable to find oneself cut off from a just comprehension of the subtleties of ordinary life.

Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney have such antithetical responses to Gothic novels and are consequently limited, but in very different ways. Catherine's vision is narrow and restricted, because she conjures only fantastical possibilities for her visit to Northanger Abbey. In contrast, Henry's comprehension of the possibilities of what may happen at Northanger is restricted not by fanciful expectations of the unusual and the improbable, but

[1] See Stuart M. Tave, Some Words of Jane Austen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973) pp. 62-63. Professor Tave's comments on the dangers of extreme pictures of human nature are particularly enlightening.

by what he calls a "rational" lack of such expectations. The exact limitations of Henry's vision are revealed when he realizes the Gothic suspicions Catherine has been entertaining about his father. He asks her:

> 'What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you - Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing; where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay every thing open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?' (NA 197-8).

These words seem very sensible. The elements of the world that he raises in his support may all ideally exclude the probability of a reality such as that reflected in the Gothic novel, but Henry does not give adequate weight to the imperfections which make the subsequent behaviour of his father to Catherine not only possible, but given the General's disposition, probable. If Catherine has been admitting ideas too improbable to be entertained in their world, Henry has failed to admit other ideas that ought to be considered as distinctly possible.[2]

When Jane Austen comes to write Sanditon she acknowledges

[2]For more detailed discussion of this interpretation of Northanger Abbey, particularly regarding the role of Henry Tilney, see J.K. Mathison, "Northanger Abbey and Jane Austen's Conception of the Value of Fiction", ELH, 24 (1957); Frank J. Kearful, "Satire and the Form of the Novel: The Problem of Aesthetic Unity in Northanger Abbey", ELH, 32 (1965); and Robert Kiely, "Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen 1803", in The Romantic Novel in England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972). A. Walton Litz is less willing than these critics to consider Henry Tilney as the object of the author's irony; his discussion of Tilney in his Jane Austen: A Study of Her Artistic Development (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 63-66, suggests that Henry's account of the impending "riot" in London is consciously (on Henry's part rather than on Jane Austen's) constructed from the actual details of the Gordon Riots of 1780. I am inclined to think that the joke is on Henry himself, an interpretation which lends further support to the arguments of Mathison, Kearful and Kiely.

that the artist's responsibility encompasses more than just a truthful representation of real forms. He is faced with the intricate, well-nigh impossible task of maintaining control over the meaning the images embody. The reader may attribute a meaning to an image which has nothing to do with the purpose the artist himself designs. Whereas the limitations of Catherine and Henry are those of the Gothic novel, the limitations of Sir Edward Denham are not precisely those of the sentimental novel. Through Sir Edward's responses to Richardson's novels and other sentimental fiction, Jane Austen indicates the way in which the artist's reflection of reality, however accurate and truthful, however rigid its moral aim, can be distorted and misused by the reader. Sir Edward's using "all the impassioned, & most exceptionable parts of Richardsons [novels]; & such Authors as have since appeared to tread in Richardson's steps, so far as Man's determined pursuit of Woman in defiance of every opposition of feeling & convenience is concerned" (MW 404) as sort of handbooks for seduction and incentives to immorality, arises from his own moral stupidity. One can hardly condemn works of art because they are read by stupid men whose clouded understandings and blinding selfishness lead them to misuse literature. But the possibility of such perversion of purpose must put the artist on guard against leaving his work vulnerable to such misuse.

The vulnerability of a work is closely related to the technical means employed to convey the reality of a fictional situation to the reader. Whatever good moral purpose Richardson or his followers had in depicting seductions, they failed to account adequately for the ease with which image and meaning are dissociated. It is possible to view a fictional seduction imaged

in minute detail with the prurient sensibilities of a Lovelace, however disapproving the author might be of the scenes he himself is imaging. Jane Austen implies a belief that images themselves have a kind of power, a power which the author cannot completely control.

Precisely how she would have developed the attempted seduction of Clara by Sir Edward, it is useless to speculate;[3] but we can examine how she confronted the problem of dealing with seduction in her other novels. The affair of Wickham and Lydia is reported and is given unimaged reality by what we know of the characters and actions of both in the past, even though we do not before their marriage actually see them together establishing a relationship that seems in any way significant. Jane Austen convinces us of the reality of their affair, makes us believe in the reality of an action that is not directly described, by making us understand personalities and by accumulating a few essential details - their both being in Brighton, the existence of the disgraced Mrs. Younge, Wickham's gambling debts. She takes a greater risk in Mansfield Park, for the personalities of Crawford and Maria do not come into conjunction off-stage, as it were.[4] The effects they have on one another

[3] Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), sees a change in Jane Austen's treatment of seduction when she writes Sanditon: "The fact is that Jane Austen is finally resisting the extraordinary conventional pressure, the moral imperative in effect, to which in her published novels she has always yielded, that actual seduction or the planning of seduction must never be represented comically ..." p.244. The validity of this view depends to some extent on believing that Sir Edward poses a serious threat to Clara, which is doubtful since the narrator tells us that Clara perceived Sir Edward's intentions but did not intend to be seduced. Her awareness also undercuts his planning of such an event. Jane Austen seems not, in fact, to have thrown off convention, but remains firmly within its bounds here, treating seduction comically only, as Mudrick claims earlier in his book, "provided she did not have to regard it as actual and achieved" p.215. He cites the Jane Fairfax-Mr.Dixon imaginary romance as an example of a seduction neither actual nor achieved.

[4] Mudrick notes that "In the frigid atmosphere of Mansfield Park, she did not hesitate to present several stages of the intrigue between Maria and Crawford", p.216. One must, however, consider how Jane Austen presents these stages; her boldness surely derives from more than the moral chill of the novel.

are shown in some detail both at Sotherton and during the theatricals. But Jane Austen cleverly dissociates their mutual seduction from its physical consummation. When the time comes for their adultery she does not have to go to London, does not have to image this seduction: it would have been in a sense repetitious. We know enough from their past relationship to believe that the present one might end in adultery. As in Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen accumulates important details - the meeting at Mrs. Fraser's party, Crawford's seeking entrée into Rushworth's house, his going to Richmond and her to Twickenham for Easter, the nature of Maria's friends in Twickenham - to suggest a complete action without imaging directly and wholly the form of that action. Jane Austen avoided imaging the seductions in her novels, not because such a representation was beyond her powers, but because she did not want to allow the reader the opportunity to dissociate the image from the meaning she intends to convey. The reality of the seductions in Jane Austen's novels derive from the psychological and moral import with which she invests them rather than from an accurate and complete imaging of form itself. Jane Austen attempts, by making the image of the form less vivid, less complete, to make the meaning, the ethical and psychological import, more vivid, more complete.

In both Northanger Abbey and the Sanditon fragment Jane Austen's explicit emphasis is upon certain demerits, certain dangers of art. Northanger Abbey tacitly presents a corrective vision which attempts to avoid the demerits of the Gothic novel; one may presume, I think, that Jane Austen meant to provide a similarly corrective vision through Sir Edward's plan to seduce Clara in Sanditon. But in Jane Austen's other five novels she

is much less concerned with the dangers of images in art and more concerned with the dangers and benefits of real forms in life, particularly those forms dictated by society.

Jane Austen carefully explores the power of some common social forms and institutions: manners, leisurely activities, language, family, friendship and profession. These forms are meant ideally to give order and shape to the life of the individual and hence of society. Lord David Cecil has remarked: "Jane Austen was profoundly moral. She thought you lived only to be good, that it was the first duty of everyone to be sincere, unselfish, and disinterested."[5] She looks at real forms to determine if they facilitate, promote and embody man's fulfilment of this duty. She again and again implicitly demands: Does this form encourage or retard man's ability to be good? She does not reject a form because men misuse or abuse it. (This would be analogous to Admiral Croft's condemning boats as useless because he encounters an inept shipbuilder.) She weighs the merits and demerits of these forms, and conveys the dangers and benefits of each form. Jane Austen did not image real forms solely for the purpose of recording the outward and visible aspects of a particular social class, in a particular place, at a particular time. She obviously chose to reflect these forms as a means of creating a recognizable image of the society of her contemporary readers, but the end towards which she uses these images is to show the powers, beneficial and destructive, that such forms exert over human nature.

Because the predominant interest in four of Jane Austen's six finished novels is the relationship of human nature to these forms, the greater part of this study is concerned with various

[5]David Cecil, Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p.32.

aspects of that relationship. Although these themes have an important place in all the novels, Jane Austen's interest finds its most complex and complete expresssion in Mansfield Park. In Emma and Persuasion the themes remain but we find an increasing concern with showing the power that external nature rather than social forms has over man. Jane Austen seems to have reached a point of rational reconciliation between the power of human nature and the power of social forms, and to have determined to give more emphasis to the mysterious operations of external nature, particularly as manifested in chance, on human nature and society. By examining Jane Austen's views of nature in her earlier and later novels, and by looking closely at the use she makes of the forms of man's own devising, I believe that one can see a line of evolution in Jane Austen's art. She begins with a desire to show the beneficial and detrimental aspects of forms that society provides to help man shape his destiny, and ends by acknowledging that however valuable such forms may be, however important an adherence to the soundest of these forms may be, human life and human happiness are always to a great degree at the mercy of the mysterious, incomprehensible forces of external nature.

Chapter I: Human and 'Inanimate' Nature

1: The Concept of the Natural

Jane Austen's focus as a rationalist and a moralist is upon the laws of nature which man can comprehend and control. Her use of what she calls "inanimate"[1] nature reveals that she saw a direct correspondence between human and material nature. That is, she takes material nature as a metaphor for human nature. Jane Austen neither holds up material nature as a reflection of man's better nature, consequently exhalting all that is natural, nor views human or material nature as inherently malignant. She sees both as made up of conflicting qualities, the imperfection of a fallen world.[2] Thus Jane Austen takes a view of nature that was gaining currency in her time but which was to find its clearest and most complete expression in John Stuart Mill's essay, "Nature". Mill attempts to sort out the vexed question of the characteristics of nature and its relationship to man. His essay, like Jane Austen's first four novels, concerns itself with the laws of physical nature and implies that these laws are analogous to moral laws to which human nature is subject.

Mill maintains that the laws of nature are inescapable: "Man necessarily obeys the laws of nature, or in other words the

[1] Jane Austen uses "inanimate" to distinguish between human and material nature in a description of Mary Crawford, who "saw nature, inanimate nature, with little observation; her attention was all for men and women..." (MP 81). Although strictly speaking, according to the OED, animals are not classified as a part of inanimate nature, it appears that Jane Austen makes her division between humans, who have souls, and the rest ofmaterial nature, including animals, which does not. That is, she seems to have considered the root word to be animus, spirit or soul, rather than anima, breath, or animatus, life or animation.

[2] For a discussion of the question of the quality of nature see John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of 'King Lear' (London: Faber and Faber, 1949).

properties of things, but he does not necessarily guide himself by them. Though all conduct is in conformity to the laws of nature, all conduct is not grounded on knowledge of them, and intelligently directed to the attainment of purposes by means of them."[3] He continues, showing that although we cannot be free from these laws, we can determine the ends towards which our actions move by a knowledge of these laws, that is by understanding of cause and effect. He concludes: "If, therefore, the useless precept to follow nature were changed to a precept to study nature; to know and take heed of the properties of things we have to deal with, so far as these properties are capable of forwarding or obstructing any given purpose; we should have arrived at the first principle of all intelligent action, or rather at the definition of intelligent action itself."[4] Intelligent action is synonymous with action that is morally sound - good, vital, ordered, rather than evil, destructive, chaotic. At the centre of the view of human nature of both Mill and Jane Austen is a deep awareness of the conflict between the elements that are morally sound and those that are unsound. Both are in effect natural. The problem that then arises is not that of choosing between the natural and the artificial, or even of synthesizing the natural and the artificial, but of cultivating the beneficial and limiting the destructive powers of nature.[5]

[3]John Stuart Mill, "Nature", in Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, ed. J.M. Robson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), vol. X, p.379.

[4]Mill, pp.379-80.

[5]See especially Samuel Kliger, "Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice in the Eighteenth-Century Mode", in Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'Pride and Prejudice' (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp.46-58. The problem of maintaining that Jane Austen advocated simply a synthesis of the natural and the artificial is apparent when one thinks of Maria and Crawford, who use artificiality, social forms, to facilitate first their flirtation and then their adultery. They use the artificial, the social, for precisely the opposite purpose from what these forms are designed.

Acknowledging that nature contains both good and evil destroyed the validity of the use of "natural" and "unnatural" as terms of absolute moral value. But Mary McCarthy maintains that Jane Austen does in fact use natural to designate such value: "...Nature or, rather, the natural - the reverse of affectation - is in fact a guarantor of value, just as it is in Shakespeare, whereas in Dostoievsky, the unnatural (unnatural crime, unnatural sons, unnatural desires and impulses) has become the most natural thing in the world...."[6] Although Jane Austen's subjects are obviously quite different from those of Dostoievsky, her view of nature seems to me much closer to that of the Russian novelists than it is to that of Shakespeare. In Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park and Emma characters themselves use "natural" and "unnatural" to convey moral import, but Jane Austen makes clear that they do so at their peril, at the sacrifice, in most cases, of their own good sense.

The terms "natural" and "unnatural" have ceased to function as indications of moral import, and can now convey only the ethically neutral meanings of "usual" and "unusual". Nevertheless, three of the characters in Pride and Prejudice, attempting to justify themselves or someone they like, resort to calling actions "natural" in a context that distinctly appeals to the former connotations of the word and thereby lends an implicit moral approval to the actions. Elizabeth Bennet is predisposed to approve Wickham, for he has paid attention to her, flattered her and thereby gained her good opinion. When he transfers his attention to Miss King, Lizzy is determined, against all good sense, to approve the motive for his action: "The sudden

[6]Mary McCarthy, "One Touch of Nature", in The Writing on the Wall and Other Literary Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1970), pp.190-1.

acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm of the young lady... but Elizabeth, less clear-sighted perhaps in his case than in Charlotte's, did not quarrel with him for his wish of independence. Nothing, on the contrary, could be more natural... she was ready to allow it a wise and desirable measure..." (PP 149-150). Elizabeth's lapse of good sense is soon shared by Darcy, who makes the same sort of appeal to the authority of nature to justify his prejudices springing from his pride. He has mortified Elizabeth by speaking to her of his scruples about marrying her: "'Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections?'" (PP 192). Darcy is as predisposed to like himself as Lizzy is to like Wickham: pride and vanity give rise to the prejudices of both. Jane Bennet has neither the pride nor the vanity of her sister and Darcy, but she is prey to an excessive candour, an insistence upon placing every action in the most generous light. Such generosity can become so limiting that it seems a parody of the blindly generous attitude of Lizzy towards Wickham, and of Darcy towards himself. Jane attributes Miss Bingley's rude neglect of her to anxiety on Bingley's behalf. Miss Bingley's rudeness she cannot deny, but the motives for the neglect she is sure are "'natural and amiable'" (PP 148). Jane Austen stresses here not so much the failure of these characters to share her own understanding of nature as their using "natural" as a term of moral approbation for justifying action or opinion that good sense should show them is reprehensible.

Mary Crawford's use of "natural" in Mansfield Park marks the same confusion and impreciseness that concerned Jane Austen in Pride and Prejudice. Like Darcy, Elizabeth and Jane, Mary clings

to old connotations and relies on them to justify her own failings, her own prejudices. When she writes to Fanny to inquire about Tom Bertram's illness, she cannot contain her delight in the possibility of Edmund's becoming the Bertram heir, and she attributes the same exhilaration to Fanny: "'And now, do not trouble yourself to be ashamed of either my feelings or your own. Believe me, they are not only natural, they are philanthropic and virtuous'" (MP 434). Mary is right to call her own feelings natural - if she means that they are in keeping with her habitual sacrifice of right feeling to her mercenary ambitions. But such feeling would hardly be in keeping with Fanny's usual awareness of the pain and suffering of others and her sympathy for them. Ironically, Mary's feelings would be quite unnatural to Fanny for selfish as well as unselfish reasons: Fanny would hardly be delighted by anything that secured Mary for Edmund. The feelings of both Fanny and Mary are natural to each, but Mary's feelings are selfish and vicious, contrary to what she says, and Fanny's, lending a certain accidental truth to Mary's words, are indeed virtuous and philanthropic: but they are not the feelings Mary assigns to Fanny. Jane Austen's full understanding of the dangers of a facile use of "natural" is particularly apparent here.

These dangers, these ambiguities arising from the natural's signifying not necessarily the morally sound but only the usual, the expected, lead Jane Austen to use "wild" to describe what would previously have been called "unnatural". Lydia Bennet's wildness is implied when she is described as having "high animal spirits" (PP 45), and when Lizzy warns their father that Lydia is "'absolutely uncontrolled!'" (PP 231). When Lydia returns to Longbourne married to Wickham, who, according to the housekeeper

at Pemberley, "'has turned out very wild'" (PP 247), she is "Lydia still; untamed, unabashed, wild, noisy and fearless" (PP 315). Elizabeth implies the connection between the wild and the natural, which shows that although the conduct of Lydia and Wickham is natural, it is by no means morally sound. Their union is natural, the probable result of their natures: "While the contents of [Jane's] letter remained on her mind, she was all surprise - all astonishment that Wickham should marry a girl, whom it was impossible he could marry for money; and how Lydia could ever have attached him, had appeared incomprehensible. But now it was all too natural" (PP 279).

But even the use of "wild" to denote the reprehensible part of nature poses certain problems. Mrs. Bennet and Mrs. Hurst use "wild" not as a part of a natural scheme, but as the opposite of decorous, socially proper; "wild" becomes a term of social rather than moral disapprobation.[7] When Lizzy arrives at Netherfield with mud on her petticoats to visit the ailing Jane, Mrs. Hurst remarks that she "'really looked almost wild'" (PP 35). Mrs. Bennet tries to put an end to a conversation between Lizzy and Bingley by saying "'Lizzy... remember where you are, and do not run on in the wild manner that you are suffered to do at home'" (PP 42). The irony of both these comments lies in the speakers' failure to understand Lizzy's actions or her words. Her concern for her sister's health is as incomprehensible to Mrs. Hurst's selfish nature as her quick mind is to Mrs. Bennet's obtuse nature: both women call Lizzy wild because she is beyond their ken. They insist upon an artificiality dictated by their

[7]See Lloyd W. Brown, "Jane Austen and the Feminist Tradition", NCF, 28 (1974), p.332. Brown quotes an ironic use Mary Wollstoncraft makes of the word "wild" when speaking of society's view of young women like Elizabeth Bennet.

own mean understanding.

The subjective use of words associated with nature to signify either moral or social import is acknowledged by Edmund Bertram, who in discussing Mary Crawford's view of adultery notes the relativity of words associated with nature: "'I do not consider her as meaning to wound my feelings. The evil lies yet deeper; in her total ignorance, unsuspiciousness of there being such feelings, in a perversion of mind which made it natural to her to treat the subject as she did. She was speaking only, as she had been used to hear others speak, as she imagined every body else would speak'" (MP 456). Unlike Mary's own use of "natural" or the uses of "natural" we noted in Pride and Prejudice, Edmund calls Mary's words, Mary's view of adultery, "natural", not as a means of justifying her opinion but of conveying how deep in her own mind lies the error in her judgment. The naturalness of Mary's response is a mark of the extent of her moral confusion. Mr. Knightley makes a similar point when Emma challenges his opinion of Frank Churchill. Emma demands: "'What has Frank Churchill done, to make you suppose him such an unnatural creature?'" (E 145). Mr. Knightley replies: "'I am not supposing him at all an unnatural creature, in suspecting that he may have learnt to be above his connections, and to care very little for any thing but his own pleasure, from living with those who have always set him the example of it. It is a great deal more natural than one could wish, that a young man, brought up by those who are proud, luxurious, and selfish, should be proud, luxurious, and selfish too'" (E 145). Had Frank been brought up by people of different characters, of different values, and had he nevertheless turned out as he has, then he might well have been called unnatural, just as had Mary Crawford adopted the values of Fanny and Edmund

she might have been called unnatural - the term thus applied becoming one of moral approbation!

In Emma Jane Austen dramatizes most effectively the differing conceptions of what is natural and what unnatural, what wild and what civilized. She makes clear that however relative are the terms themselves, the values connected with the terms are by no means relative. Mrs. Elton, enthusiastically taking up Mr. Knightley's half-serious suggestion that an exploring party come to Donwell, describes how things should be done: "'There is to be no form or parade - a sort of gipsy party. - We are to walk about your gardens, and gather the strawberries ourselves, and sit under trees; - and whatever else you may like to provide, it is to be all out of doors - a table spread in the shade, you know. Every thing as natural and simple as possible'" (E 355). The resonance of this speech depends upon our recollection of two earlier events which Jane Austen evokes and connects through Mrs. Elton's calling her plan "a gipsy party". Harriet Smith's encounter with the gypsies establishes these people as rude, unfeeling, abusive, devoid of kindness and good feeling towards others. They are wild; everyone else in Emma is supposed to be civilized, pretends to be civilized. But the gypsies' abusiveness closely parallels the conduct of the Eltons to Harriet at the ball. Both events even require a rescue. When Harriet speaks of Mr. Knightley's rescue of her at the ball, Emma, for once without much aid from her fancy, thinks Harriet refers to the incident with the gypsies and to Frank's rescue of the girl. The juxtaposition of the incidents serves not only to dupe Emma, but to imply something crucial about the behaviour and the feelings of the Eltons: even though they pretend to be civilized, possess all the appearance of civility that handsome faces, lace, pearls and carriages can give, they

are in their conduct, in their feelings for others, no more civilized than the gypsies.

Mr. Knightley does not allow Mrs. Elton to impose her sense of what is natural upon him or his party. He promptly tells her that his own ideas dictate that the "'simple and the natural will be to have the table spread in the dining-room. The nature and the simplicity of gentlemen and ladies, with their servants and furniture, I think is best observed by meals within doors'" (E 355). To find Mr. Knightley, "who had nothing of ceremony about him" (E 57), suddenly championing such nicety for its own sake strikes a peculiar note. But at the end of the conversation Jane Austen explains his attitude: "Mr. Knightley had another reason for avoiding a table in the shade. He wished to persuade Mr. Woodhouse, as well as Emma, to join the party; and he knew that to have any of them sitting down out of doors to eat would inevitably make him ill. Mr. Woodhouse must not, under the specious pretence of a morning drive, and an hour or two spent at Donwell, be tempted away to his misery" (E 356). Mr. Knightley uses ceremony, not to regale in the credit it brings upon himself, as Mrs. Elton is wont to do, but to enable him to show his attention to and concern for the comfort of others.[8] His use of social form to signify what is natural suggests the relationship of nature and society, how society is meant to embody the best aspects of nature. Here is a standard of the natural that Jane Austen values and approves.

[8]Mr. Knightley's use of form and ceremony throws some light on Lizzy Bennet's conduct. Since the only inconvenience in her walking to Netherfield is to herself, and since she is prompted by a concern for Jane, we can see that neither she nor Mr. Knightley is attached to form as a means of parading themselves, their dignity and fashion. Ceremony is a tool to be used or put aside, depending upon the circumstances, to promote the comfort of other people. In Lizzy's case, this requires a sacrifice of her own comfort and convenience.

2: The Problems of Improvements

John Stuart Mill's "Nature" again provides an excellent gloss to Jane Austen and sheds considerable light on one of her most powerful metaphors: landscape improvements. Having argued that nature contains both good and evil, he marks how meaningless is the dictum "Follow nature" and points out that artificiality, in the sense of taming and using nature for beneficial purposes is by no means to be dismissed as an evil: "If the artificial is not better than the natural, to what end are all the arts of life? To dig, to plough, to build, to wear clothes, are direct infringements of the injunction to follow nature."[9] Man must, he insists, admit the imperfections of nature, "which it is man's business, and merit, to be always endeavouring to correct or mitigate."[10] Mill then shows the intimate connection this idea forms between human and material nature: "The best persons have always held it to be the essence of religion, that the paramount duty of man upon earth is to amend himself: but all except monkish quietists have annexed to this in their inmost minds ... the additional religious duty of amending the world, and not solely the human part of it but the material, the order of physical nature."[11]

Anne Elliot, in meditating upon Wentworth's praise of firmness of character, wonders if he has considered that this, "like all other qualities of the mind... should have its proportions and limits" (P 116). That is, every quality of mind has the capacity

[9] Mill, p.381.

[10] Mill, p.381.

[11] Mill, p.381.

for being a virtue - if proportions and limits are observed - or a vice if they are unheeded.[12] Every individual has the responsibility for determining which aspects of his disposition need cultivation, need to be made stronger and more prominent, and which need to be controlled and weakened. Darcy is only half correct when he proclaims "'There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome'" (PP 58). Darcy's good sense had made him realize that everyone, even himself, has some natural defect, but his pride, which is the defect of his own disposition - not resentment, as he suggests - has made him believe that his own inability to correct his fault indicates the existence of such an incorrigible fault in everyone. By the end of the novel he has not ceased to have any pride, but he has begun to understand its proper proportions and limits.

Implicit here is a quality of mind that all Jane Austen's characters share: malleability. The capacity for change is common to all nature - human and material. Jane Austen stresses the importance of malleability through her uses of the phrase "human nature" in Mansfield Park. She uses the phrase from time to time in all her novels, often in some witty aphorism such as her opening description of Augusta Elton in Emma: "Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of" (E 181). But in Mansfield Park all five uses of the phrase imply the capacity of human nature for change, of either a beneficial or detrimental kind.

Jane Austen admired a tractable disposition, but in Mrs.Grant

[12]See Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists", in Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. B.C. Southam (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p.115, for a discussion of Jane Austen's Aristotelian view of human nature.

she shows the evil of being too malleable. Mrs. Grant tells Mary Crawford that "'if one scheme of happiness fails, human nature turns to another...'" (MP 46). Her own flexibility gives her a cheerful nature and enables her to adapt herself easily to the faults of others. But a less tractable nature might have led her to be less accommodating and more instrumental in helping others improve.[13] Sir Thomas contrasts with Mrs. Grant in that he perceives malleability as a weakness and is himself too rigid in his opinion. He expresses his view that "'human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey'" (MP 248), which implies a theoretical belief in the possibility of improvement. But in practice Sir Thomas counts on the weakness of human nature to achieve his own desires, specifically to make Fanny agreeable to Crawford's proposal: "Sir Thomas... went on with his own hopes, and his own observations, still feeling a right, by all his knowledge of human nature, to expect to see the effect of the loss of power and consequence, on his niece's spirits, and the past attentions of the lover producing a craving for their return..." (MP 368). Sir Thomas and Mrs. Grant are both irresponsible: she in her indiscriminate accommodation of everyone, he in his belief that everyone should acquiesce to his judgment.

Edmund Bertram has a more complete understanding of malleability than either Mrs. Grant or his father. He admits that Mary Crawford's description of a fidgeting and mind-wandering

[13] Mrs. Bennet similarly indulges Kitty and Lydia, barring them from improvement, though with far less drastic results than come from Mrs. Grant's indulgences. We see a similar pattern in Mrs. Dashwood's attitude towards Marianne, and even to a certain extent in Miss Taylor's (i.e. Mrs. Weston's) towards Emma.

group at daily prayers is "'an amusing sketch, and human nature cannot say it was not so'" (MP 87). But his understanding is not limited to what is; he comprehends what should and can be. He is most closely similar to Fanny Price in this view. When she hears of the adultery of Maria and Crawford, her immediate response is that "it was too horrible a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of!" (MP 441). That human nature given all the advantages made possible by intelligence, education, rank and money could move to an end the very opposite of improvement is incomprehensible to Fanny. But upon more careful reflection "her judgment told her it was so. His unsettled affections, wavering with his vanity, Maria's decided attachment, and no sufficient principle on either side, gave it possibility" (MP 441). Ideally, Fanny would like to consider the malleability of human nature as a guarantee of improvement, but her judgment makes it impossible for her to deny that malleability can lead just as logically and naturally to dilapidation. Henry and Maria have not cut themselves off from nature; they have allied themselves with the destructive rather than the beneficial powers of nature.

That one of the principle themes in Jane Austen's novels is the distinguishing reality from appearance has become a critical commonplace. But Jane Austen's concern seems to me more complex than this; the problem is not adequately stated in these terms. The deeper problem lies in comprehending nature - the laws that act upon reality, determining the course and direction of change. Mary Crawford usually sees what is - that her brother is an unfeeling flirt, that Dr. Grant is an ill-tempered glutton, even that she herself is selfish and mercenary - but she never

understands the probable consequences, the ends towards which these failings tend - Henry's loss of Fanny, Dr. Grant's death as a result of over-indulgence, her own estrangement from Edmund. She perceives only what is before her, as she herself says with regard to landscape improvements: "'I have no eye, or ingenuity for such matters, but as they are before me...'" (MP 57). Mary views human nature as fixed, with no possibility of change: "'Selfishness must always be forgiven you know, because there is no hope of a cure'" (MP 68). Mary seems to believe that social form - in this case, perfunctory forgiveness of selfishness - exists not to enable one to overcome or control one's faults but rather to allow one's faults free play without imposing any of the unpleasant consequences of wrong conduct. But the very organic nature of reality gives rise to possibilities of improvement, as well as to the natural ends towards which habitually wrong conduct leads.

Emma Woodhouse shares something of Mary's limitations; she has a greater perception of what is before her than has generally been credited.[14] Emma is, after all, not wrong in thinking Mr. Elton or Frank Churchill in love. Nor in her realization that Frank is not in love with her. She is correct in seeing that Jane Fairfax must have a hidden motive for not accompanying the Campbells to Ireland. But like Mary, Emma cannot extend her understanding beyond the most immediate observation. Mary does not care what lies beyond; Emma fantasizes what lies beyond. When Mr. Knightley advises Emma, he does not admonish her to be guided by reality, as would be expected if the conflict of the

[14] W.J. Harvey, "The Plot of Emma", EIC 17 (1967), notes that Emma's fantasies are based on reality, from what she actually sees before her, and that it is this tie with reality, however tentative, that makes possible her reform. One can compare Emma with Miss Bates, whose connection with reality lies only in what she sees and hears. Miss Bates is rarely able to understand what she observes, but unlike Emma she never fantasizes, never makes erroneous assumptions or leaps to false conclusions.

novel was one of appearance and reality. He knows that the deceptiveness of appearance makes that difficult, if not impossible. Mr. Knightley commends nature to her: "'If you were as much guided by nature in your estimate of men and women, and as little under the power of fancy and whim in your dealings with them, as you are where these children are concerned, we might always think alike" (E 98-9). Emma has an advantage that Mary lacks: she knows that there is more than the immediately perceived reality, and her amendment consists principally in her turning from fancy to nature. Emma possesses a moral standard that Mary lacks; Mary would have only laughed at Frank Churchill's duplicity, as she laughs at that of her brother, but Emma is justly disapproving of Frank's conduct and comprehends fully both the extent of the pain that he has caused and that he might have caused. The themes of deceptiveness of appearance, the limitation of immediate reality, the facile nature of fancy and the necessity of a just comprehension of the wholeness of nature unite in the improvements motif in Mansfield Park.

During Jane Austen's time the interest in landscape improvements was so commonplace that the motif in Mansfield Park would have had an immediacy that is lost to the modern reader.[15] Critics have attempted to explain the different views of the characters on the subject in terms of a dichotomy: some

15 For a review of the criticism concerning Jane Austen's use of improvements, and a consideration of general works on landscape improvements in Jane Austen's time, see Alistair M. Duckworth, The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels (London: John Hopkins Press, 1971), esp. footnote 5, p.39.

characters approve improvements and some do not.[16] But this idea is inadequate to encompass the variety of views expressed by the group. Perhaps the only thing that all the characters do agree upon, theoretically, is the desirability of improvements. The variety of opinions on the subject lies in the different attitudes towards the personal responsibilities involved in improving and in the conceptions of what actually comprises improvements, the different comprehensions of manner and kind.

Jane Austen perceived in the fashionable concern for improving the danger of dissociating the commonsensical usefulness of improvements from a near obsession with improvements purely of appearance. The rage for ornamental improvement had led to a gross neglect of utilitarian improvement (of the sort Mill indicates in his essay) of both man and nature. The emphasis of the time was on the outward and the visible. Improvements tended towards the creation of the illusion of perfection rather than towards a striving for true perfection. Jane Austen saw that not only did the improvement of man have an analogue in the improvement of material nature, but that faults in landscape improvement reflect faults in man's values, which dictate his improvements of himself.

Jane Austen has herself been charged with championing the

[16] Duckworth's study of the improvements episode moves away from the idea of approval or disapproval of improvements, but my view of Jane Austen's use of this motif differs somewhat from his. He maintains that Jane Austen objects to doing too much (citing the claim of Mrs. Norris to having done "a vast deal"). It seems to me that the significance of the improvements motif lies not in degree, but in the proper harmony of beauty and utility, the latter being given priority over the former. Jane Austen is careful not to judge improvements purely on grounds of taste (except, perhaps, where the felling of trees is concerned), but she distinctly disapproves of improvements that give greater value to appearance than to utility. My view is closer to that of Ann Banfield, "The Moral Landscape of Mansfield Park", NCF, 26 (1971). See particularly her discussion of the moral significance of landscape improvements in romantic and neo-classical terms, pp. 1-4.

superficial qualities of appearance and personality, especially in Mansfield Park. The general argument proposes that Jane Austen condemns in Mansfield Park the vitality and sparkle she championed in Pride and Prejudice. Almost as a penance for having written something "too light, and bright, and sparkling," (L 299) she wrote Mansfield Park. The brightness in the later novel is usually found in the oppressive glare of the summer day at Sotherton, in the unremitting glare of sunlight in the Prices' sitting-room in Portsmouth: it is the light of nature, which is not always pleasant. Sparkle we discover in the "sparkling dark" (MP 470) eyes of Mary Crawford. The juxtaposition of "sparkling" and "dark" is not accidental. The two adjectives are not antithetical, but rather a dangerous combination: Mary's mind, like her eyes, may sparkle, but it is dark. Elizabeth Bennet's eyes are dark and sparkling like Mary's, but her mind is light. Elizabeth's charm may lie in her sparkle, but her greater worth resides in her light. This light makes her the sister of Fanny Price, who has "soft light eyes" (MP 470). Jane Austen did not have so rigid a mind as to form inflexible associations of material and moral value. She might well have preferred dark sparkling eyes to soft light ones, but she never confused light and dark eyes with light and dark minds. She consistently places the greater value on a mind of light, and her consistency is not violated by a preference of a mind that is sparkling and light over one that is light but lacks sparkle. That is, one may, as a matter of taste, prefer Lizzy Bennet to Fanny Price, but a failure of moral judgment, rather than taste, is signified by a preference of Mary Crawford to Fanny Price.

The difficulties that arise from Mansfield Park of course go beyond discerning the significance of the qualities of eyes!

Lionel Trilling's essay on the novel shows clearly the errors that arise from seeking to impose rigid dichotomies on Jane Austen's vision in Mansfield Park.[17] He suggests that the novel asserts that the only form of moral probity is quietness and dullness. The praise of the novel "is not for social freedom but for social stasis."[18] But Jane Austen juxtaposes Fanny Price and Lady Bertram in order to dispel this charge. She is interested in what lies behind the outward qualities of quietness and dullness. Lady Bertram is indolent and useless, Fanny is diffident, modest and fearful of doing wrong. Not only, though, is Lady Bertram patently not meant to be recommended as an example of a good way of living, William Price, who is heartily approved, possesses the qualities of spiritedness, vivacity, celerity and lightness which Trilling says are presented in the novel as "deterrents to the good life."[19] Jane Austen gives her moral approbation, which has nothing to do with appearance and temper, to both William and Fanny. Making a more general judgment, Trilling maintains that "No other great novel has so anxiously asserted the need to find security, to establish in fixity and enclosure, a refuge from the dangers and openness of chance."[20] This point is well taken, but the literalness of fixity and enclosure implied by Trilling's other comments is not supported

[17]Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park", in The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955).

[18]Trilling, p.211.

[19]Trilling, p.211.

[20]Trilling, p.210.

by the whole of the novel. Fanny and William outwardly lead very different kinds of lives, but both find security in the fixity and enclosure of sound principles, which are also the basis of their deepest freedom.

Although Jane Austen does not confuse form and meaning, her characters often do. As a result they sometimes give all their effort to improving the surface of things - or even worse, mistake the superficial perfections they possess for complete perfection. Among the most common of these superficial advantages are those of physical beauty and wealth, both of which one sometimes gains simply by being born, but which are not in themselves a real merit to possess. Mary Crawford and Maria and Julia Bertram accept as their birthright their fortune, beauty and even strength. All three young women fall prey to the illusion that these qualities constitute perfection. The only improvement that Mary and Maria can envision lies in their becoming richer. Emma Woodhouse has the same gifts as Mary, Maria and Julia, these "best blessings of existence" (E 5), but she is less personally vain and less inflexible in her thinking than they. Above all she values moral principles that are less than nothing to them. Mary, Maria and Julia are not only happy to have everyone else think them perfect; they share that estimation themselves. Emma knows that she is not perfect, but she is willing to allow anyone else to think her so. Mr. Knightley pinpoints the truth that Emma must eventually come to terms with - that twenty-one years in the world have allowed her to mistake good fortune for merit. Emma takes credit for the marriage of Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston, but Mr. Knightley remarks: "'Success supposes endeavour.... why do you talk of success? where is your merit? - what are you proud of? - you made a lucky guess; and <u>that</u> is all that can be said'" (E 12-13). Later, at Box Hill, Mr. Knightley comments on Mr. Weston's

conundrum: "'Perfection should not have come quite so soon'" (E 371). Emma is not perfect, and no endeavour on her part has made her deserve to be called so.

Endeavour is crucial to improvement, but money can sometimes be substituted for endeavour, thereby giving one the illusion of not needing to exert oneself. Mary Crawford and Rushworth are prepared to substitute money for personal exertion in acquiring landscape improvements. Rushworth wants physical beauty, a showplace, and he is prepared to pay Repton to give it to him. He is equally willing to pay for the beauty of Maria Bertram, even though she does not love him: Maria is an ornament, another adornment for Sotherton. Mary's idea of improvement is much the same: "'I should be most thankful to any Mr. Repton who would undertake it, and give me as much beauty as he could for my money...'" (MP 57). Both take money as the sine qua non of worth, the beauty acquired being commensurate with the amount of money spent. John Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility has the same attitude; he calculates his sister's beauty in terms of the size of the income of the men her beauty is likely to attract: "'[Marianne] was as handsome a girl last September, as any I ever saw; and as like to attract the men.... I question whether Marianne now, will marry a man worth more than five or six hundred a-year, at the utmost..." (SS 227). The common idea shared by Mary, Rushworth, and Dashwood is that money and beauty determine worth, and that that which is of value can be purchased: a woman purchases all the security, luxury and material comfort that her beauty entitles her to; a man purchases with his money the merit of a beautiful wife. Neither transaction is more than a superficial improvement.

Not all love of appearance signifies an over-valuing of

money. A deeper fault lies in a general limitation of values, a placing of too much value on the ephemeral and material quality of things. At its simplest level the love of appearance reveals a personal vanity that cuts one off from an awareness of anything but one's image of oneself, as in Mrs. Allen's obsession with clothes or Rushworth's fascination with the pink satin cape he is to wear in Lovers' Vows. Marianne Dashwood cannot value Colonel Brandon properly because he wears a flannel waistcoat - a powerful symbol to her of his failure of vitality and youth, which are the qualities exalted in her personal scheme of values. Mary Crawford has a similar attitude towards clothing. She is ashamed of Edmund's profession and is consequently relieved that "there is no distinction of dress now-a-days to tell tales..." (MP 416). Fanny Price's interest in and admiration of William's uniform contrasts with Mary's relief that there is no such outward and visible sign of Edmund's profession. Ironically, of course, Mary would be proud of William's garb, because the profession signifies to her "heroism, danger, bustle, fashion" (MP 109) - and a chance to become wealthy. For Fanny the uniform is the emblem of all the values and principles of William's profession - values and principles also comprehended by Edmund's profession.

Mrs. Bennet and Lydia admire uniforms but neither for the reasons of Mary or Fanny. They are just fond of the look of a uniform! For Lydia a coat in itself is enough, as she implies when she describes the scene in Gracechurch Street on the morning of her marriage: "'And there was my aunt, all the time I was dressing, preaching and talking away just as if she was reading a sermon. However, I did not hear above one word in ten, for I was thinking, you may suppose, of my dear Wickham. I longed to know whether he would be married in his blue coat'" (PP 319). Mrs. Bennet is scandalized because Mr. Bennet refuses to give her money to buy

Lydia's wedding clothes: " She was more alive to the disgrace, which the want of new clothes must reflect on her daughter's nuptials, than to any sense of shame at her eloping and living with Wickham, a fortnight before they took place" (PP 310-11). Mrs Bennet's exhilaration when she hears of Lizzy's engagement might seem to show a mercenary spirit at work - "'Oh! my sweetest Lizzy! how rich and how great you will be! What pin-money, what jewels, what carriages you will have!'" (PP 378) - but in truth Mrs. Bennet values marriage itself, not money, above all else. Lizzy might have made the best match materially, but Mrs. Bennet can glory equally in Lydia's marriage to Wickham, for he <u>is</u> a husband! Mrs. Bennet's deepest failure is in perceiving nothing of the individual worth indicated by principles. She is blind not only to the demerit of Lydia's having eloped with Wickham, but to the unhappiness that is a probable consequence of marrying an unprincipled man.

The value of material appearance is even more limiting to a woman like Mrs. Elton, for all that she truly values is herself. She arrives in Highbury with her beauty, her lace and pearls, her talk of unbroken packs of cards, and the village at large is prepared to believe her as superior as she thinks herself. Just as she tries, but fails, to associate Emma's superiority with her own by talk of their forming a musical group, she annexes to herself the material objects signifying, to her, great worth, which she does not herself possess: the glories of Maple Grove and the Sucklings' barouche-landau are a part of her conception of her own superiority. The carriage connects her values to the worst aspect of Emma's. Mrs. Elton's love of material show is a parody of Emma's own fondness for material signs of worth.

Emma has a proper value of Mr. Knightley's character, but she has something of her father's attachment to ceremony and form.

Consequently, Emma disapproves of Mr. Knightley's lack of attention to some of these forms for their own sake: "Mr. Knightley, keeping no horses, having little spare money and a great deal of health, activity and independence, was too apt, in Emma's opinion, to get about as he could, and not use his carriage so often as became the owner of Donwell Abbey" (E 213). When he comes to the Coles' party in a carriage, Emma commends him: "'This is coming as you should do... like a gentleman'" (E 213). He understands the absurdity of the sort of show Emma values: "'How lucky that we should arrive at the same moment! for, if we had met first in the drawing-room, I doubt whether you would have discerned me to be more of a gentleman than usual. - You might not have distinguished how I came, by my look or manner'" (E 213). Mr. Knightley, of course, is not prompted by his image of himself to come in a carriage, but because he wishes to do what he can for the comfort of Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates. In his scheme of values, ceremony and form are useful conveniences for showing a proper regard for others. Emma wishes for the improvement not of Mr. Knightley's fundamental worth but of his exhibiting the material accoutrements of that worth. Mrs. Elton mistakes the trappings of gentility for gentility itself.

The dominant aspect of the ideas on landscape improvements of Mrs. Norris and Henry Crawford reveals a resemblance between their values and those of Mrs. Elton.[21] All three regale in merit for which they cannot justly take any credit. Mrs. Norris basks

[21]Jane Austen provides a verbal link between Mrs. Norris and Crawford. Mrs. Norris declares: "'... I am excessively fond of improving'" (MP 53), and when Julia asks Crawford, "'You are fond of the sort of thing?'" (MP 61), he replies, "'Excessively...'" (MP 61).

in the glory of Mansfield Park and the marriage of Rushworth and Maria, as Mrs. Elton in Maple Grove and the Sucklings. Unlike Mary Crawford and Rushworth, Mrs. Norris wants credit for making improvements without spending any money. She takes all the credit for the Bertram's adoption of Fanny, but she will contribute nothing to the financial support of the girl and does nothing to help improve her.[22] Fanny is as unworthy of her energies as her half acre at the White house. But Mrs. Norris cannot resist saying that she is an improver, claiming that she did "a vast deal in that way at the parsonage..." (MP 54). Significantly, no one present remembers Mrs. Norris' projects, and she can only point to the solitary apricot, a gift from Sir Thomas, as proof of her labours. She does, however, contrive to give herself credit for the expense and care that the Grants have taken in improving the parsonage: they have done precisely

[22]Jane Austen associates Mrs. Norris with a word that implies the opposite of improvements and hints the financial meanness involved. The word "dilapidations" is applied to the relationship of Mrs. Norris and Dr. Grant: "Dr. Grant and Mrs. Norris were seldom good friends: their acquaintance had begun in dilapidations, and their habits were totally dissimilar" (MP 55). Jane Austen hints in her use of dilapidations something more than a figurative state of disrepair in the relationship. The third definition of "dilapidation" in the OED is as follows: "The action of pulling down, allowing to fall into a state of disrepair, or in any way impairing the ecclesiastical property belonging to an incumbency." And even more to the point: "b. The sums charged against an incumbent or his representatives to make good such damage incurred during his incumbency." Knowing Mrs. Norris' meanness I do not think it unreasonable to assume she had done nothing to maintain the property of the Mansfield living during her husband's lifetime, and Sir Thomas' own financial straits probably prevented him from doing so. With the death of Mr. Norris and the purchase of the living by Dr.Grant, it is likely that Mrs.Norris was required either to pay for repairs themselves or to pay a sum to Dr.Grant. If this is the allusion Jane Austen intends, it is made even richer by the first meaning of "dilapidation" in the OED: "...wasteful expenditure, squandering." First, Tom's dilapidation - in this sense - made it necessary to sell the living to Dr. Grant; secondly, Dr.Grant's own dilapidations outrage Mrs.Norris; and thirdly, Mrs.Norris would certainly have considered having to pay for the dilapidations during her husband's incumbency a wasteful expenditure. All this functions metaphorically to emphasize the moral and spiritual dilapidations at Mansfield Park and the squandering of personal talent and resources through selfishness.

what she always meant to do![23]

Crawford is not so illiberal as Mrs. Norris, but his improvements at Everingham are designed solely to bring credit upon himself. He happily takes credit for the improvements that Mrs. Grant attributes to him without having seen the place. When we at last hear something specific about Everingham, we can deduce that Crawford's improvements have been at best superficial and incomplete. He modestly claimed that "'there was very little for me to do...'" (MP 61), but in truth he did not know what was required. When he visits Fanny in Portsmouth, he tells her that on a recent visit to Everingham he "had introduced himself to some tenants, whom he had never seen before; he had begun making acquaintance with cottages whose very existence, though on his own estate, had been hitherto unknown to him" (MP 404). He could hardly have much improved an estate which by his own admission he knows so little. The misfortune of both Mrs. Norris and Crawford is that they possess the money, the energy and the intelligence to be improvers, but will not take the trouble, will not exert themselves properly.

The over-valuing of fortune and beauty imply a dissociation, a failure to comprehend the whole - sense that should attend fortune; and the lack of vanity, beauty. Of those whose opinions

[23] Mrs. Norris makes a habit of giving herself credit in this way. For example, when Mrs. Grant offers to stay with Lady Bertram so that Edmund can go with the party to Sotherton, "Mrs. Norris thought it an excellent plan, and had it at her tongue's end, and was on the point of proposing it when Mrs. Grant spoke" (MP 80). Her falsely taking credit for even the most trivial arrangements is more pointed when she announces to Sir Thomas the plan for the carriage after the Mansfield family has dined at the parsonage: Sir Thomas could not dissent, as it had been his own arrangement...but <u>that</u> seemed forgotten by Mrs. Norris, who must fancy that she settled it all herself" (MP 281).

we hear on landscape improvements only Edmund and Fanny seem to value the significance of such comprehension. Fanny does not approve of Mary's abdication of any responsibility for improvements save providing the money: "'It would be delightful to me to see the progress of it all'" (MP 57). But her weakness lies in her lack of confidence, in her unwillingness to use her own judgment to determine the improvements.[24] Edmund is more confident and fully approves improvements: "'Mr. Rushworth is quite right, I think, in meaning to give [Sotherton] a modern dress...'" (MP 56). But he would take responsibility for what was done, would personally involve himself in the improvements: "'I do not wish to influence Mr. Rushworth... but had I a place to new-fashion, I should not put myself into the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of my own choice, and acquired progressively'" (MP 56).

His view of improvements becomes clearer in his later conversation with Crawford about Thornton Lacey. Crawford's interest is all in ornament, whereas Edmund takes a more realistic view of what his own income will afford him: "'I must be satisfied with rather less ornament and beauty. I think the house and premises may be made comfortable, and given the air of a gentleman's residence without any very heavy expense, and that must suffice me...'" (MP 242). Edmund is satisfied with comfort and utility; idle refinements are beyond his means.[25] It is perhaps most

[24] Fanny's lack of confidence is similar to that of Edward Ferrars. Elinor's defence of Edward when Marianne says she believes he has no taste for drawing suggests the view I think we are meant to take of Fanny's hesitance with regard to landscape improvements: "'He distrusts his own judgment in such matters so much, that he is always unwilling to give his opinion on any picture; but he has an innate propriety and simplicity of taste, which in general direct him perfectly right'" (SS 19).

[25] Edmund's awareness that utility and comfort have as important - perhaps even more important - a part in improvements as beauty, is shared by Edward Ferrars, who notes of a particular landscape: "'It exactly answers my idea of fine country, because it unites beauty with utility'" (SS 97).

significant that Edmund would have his improvements "acquired progressively" - that is, he would oversee the scheme as it took shape and would maintain the chance to adapt and change his judgment as the plan was executed. Crawford's plan for Everingham "was laid at Westminster - a little altered perhaps at Cambridge, and at one and twenty executed" (MP 61). He has improved his estate according to a basic plan formed as a schoolboy and only perhaps altered while he was at university. Edmund adheres to an organic principle of growth and change directed by good taste and sound judgment.

The importance of comprehending wholeness is applied to human nature in the conversation between Fanny and Edmund about Mary Crawford soon after she comes to Mansfield. Fanny acknowledges first Mary's beauty and the pleasure of hearing her talk. When pressed by Edmund, Fanny admits that Mary was wrong to speak of her uncle with disrespect. They value justly Mary's appearance and her cleverness, but are not blind to the faults that exist independently of her charm and beauty. A similar conversation occurs between Mrs. Weston and Mr. Knightley concerning Emma. Mrs. Weston wants to give emphasis to Emma's beauty and forget whatever demerits in her character are perceived by Mr. Knightley. He agrees that she is very beautiful and that he does not think her personally vain. But he is not blind to Emma's faults or to the harm that can result from her friendship with Harriet. He maintains that Emma does not "imagine she has any thing to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority" (E 38). Mrs. Weston argues that Emma will improve Harriet, but Mr. Knightley sees that the surface is all that Emma will alter, that she has never had the discipline to improve more in herself: "'[Harriet] will grow just refined enough to be uncomfortable with

those among whom birth and circumstances have placed her home. I am much mistaken if Emma's doctrines give any strength of mind, or tend at all to make a girl adapt herself rationally to the varieties of her situation in life. - They only give a little polish'" (E 38-9). Mr. Knightley sees Emma whole, and it is a wholeness that makes his love for her both right and just.

3: The Utility of Accomplishments

One tends, quite understandably I think, to associate what Jane Austen calls accomplishments with art rather than with nature. In most cases such an association is perfectly justifiable. Most of the accomplishments Jane Austen mentions are, however theoretically, connected with art - music and drawing. These accomplishments have a prominent place in the lives of the young women in Sense and Sensibility and Pride and Prejudice. In Mansfield Park Jane Austen broadens the accomplishments to include riding - a talent directly associated with nature. Her examination of accomplishments as a part of a lady's education seems designed to determine the possible moral value to be derived from such talents, the moral influence these talents exert over one's character.[26] In 1815 Jane Austen wrote to Cassandra from London: " I have been listening to dreadful Insanity. - It is Mr. Haden's firm belief that a person not musical is fit for every sort of Wickedness. I ventured to assert a little on the other side, but wished the cause in abler hands " (L 435). Jane Austen

[26]Education has long been acknowledged as one of Jane Austen's principal themes, but the place of accomplishments within the scheme of the educations of the female characters has elicited little critical comment. Kenneth Moler, Jane Austen's Art of Allusion (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), pp.120-27, discusses the problems of an education that gives emphasis to a cultivation of accomplishments rather than to a cultivation of the understanding. Lloyd W. Brown, in his essay already cited, has more recently examined the place of accomplishments in women's education, convincingly demonstrating (pp.329-32) that Jane Austen's ideas on the subject are much closer to those of Mary Wollstonecraft than to those of more conventional commentators on education.

sees the absurdity of condemning a large part of the world simply because it has not had the advantages of music masters. She does not, of course, go so far as to declare that those who are musical - are accomplished - are indeed fit for every sort of wickedness. But she shows the dangers of placing an erroneous value on accomplishments, both those which are connected with art and those connected with nature. Accomplishments provide Jane Austen with a rich field for showing an improvement in human nature that is meant to take one out of oneself, to connect one with the world beyond oneself, but which too often is simply annexed to the self, is used to gratify the ego.

Most of the young women in Jane Austen's novels possess some degree of accomplishments. Catherine Morland has none, which implies her insularity and naivety rather than an escape from a terrible moral pitfall. Only Fanny Price and Jane Fairfax are given specific pasts in which they had no accomplishments, existed in a state of unimproved nature. They share similar personalities and situations, but the specific aspects of their adoptions and subsequent improvements disclose important differences. Jane Fairfax is orphaned and seems destined to grow up "with no advantages of connection or improvement to be engrafted on what nature had given her in a pleasing person, good understanding, and warm-hearted, well-meaning relations" (E 163). The word "engrafted" strikingly suggests advantages that though not provided by nature originally are not less natural ultimately. She holds some of her original qualities in common with the child Fanny Price: "She was small of her age, with no glow of complexion, nor any other striking beauty; exceedingly timid and shy, and shrinking from notice; but her air, though awkward, was not vulgar, her voice was sweet, and when she spoke, her countenance was pretty" (MP 12).

Everyone but Edmund takes Fanny's ignorance to be stupidity; he soon realizes that she possesses a good understanding and a warm heart, which becomes the basis for her improvement.

Jane Austen gives Jane Fairfax a perfect education, one that combines the best formal instruction with the best example from those with whom she lived. The pleasure of Jane's education is vitiated only by the knowledge of the end for which it is a preparation. Here are the advantages engrafted on Jane Fairfax: "Living constantly with right-minded and well-informed people, her heart and understanding had received every advantage of discipline and culture; and Col. Campbell's residence being in London, every lighter talent had been done full justice to, by the attendance of first-rate masters" (E 164). The educational priorities are implicit here: the lighter talents, which I take it refers to accomplishments, are secondary to the advantages of discipline and culture and living with kind, well-informed people. Jane Fairfax's problems do not arise from her education, which is a harmonious blend of the useful and the ornamental, but from her desperation to escape becoming a governess.

Fanny Price does not receive so balanced an education, which is in part explained by her not having to earn her own living, as Sir Thomas makes clear: "'...We must secure to the child, or consider ourselves engaged to secure to her hereafter, as circumstances may arise, the provision of a gentlewoman...'" (MP 7). Her not being taught any music or drawing, however, is meant to stress her inferiority to Maria and Julia Bertram. Edmund provides the affection that supports Fanny, and makes her reading useful by discussing it with her. But her lack of confidence in herself, though perhaps not arising from her being denied instruction in the lighter talents, is reinforced by the denial. Jane Austen

examines in Mansfield Park the difficulty of sustaining one's moral probity if one has sound principles but no sense of one's own worth, and conversely the difficulty if one has a high opinion of one's personal worth but no sound principles. Fanny is placed in a situation in which the prevailing standard of values derives from those I discussed in the preceding section - beauty and wealth, to which accomplishments are easily annexed. Unlike Catherine Morland, who had grown up in a world where a lack of accomplishments is no great demerit, Fanny inhabits a world in which they are the greatest merit. Whatever values Sir Thomas theoretically holds, Mrs. Norris' denigrations of Fanny, and Fanny's own awareness of a kind of superiority in her cousins' talents, bar her from developing much self-confidence.

The education of Maria and Julia Bertram is superficially like that of Jane Fairfax. They theoretically have all the advantages of discipline and culture, as well as those of the "lighter talents". But the discipline and culture have been devoid, as Sir Thomas finally realizes, of "active principle" (MP 463).[27] The lighter talents, accomplishments, have been given greater value than right thinking and feeling; shallow artifice has become more important than moral understanding. The same inverted values inform the ideas that Rushworth and Crawford have about improvements of their estates. Yet, Rushworth's estate has derelict cottages in its village,[28] and Crawford's

[27] Sir Thomas also notes that "to be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments - the authorised object of their youth - could have had no useful influence...no moral effect on the mind" (MP 463).

[28] Here one sees that ornament and comfort, beauty and utility, need not be dissociated. If Rushworth had improved the derelict cottages, they would not only look better, they would, in all probability, be more comfortable for his tenants. The real danger lies in the sacrifice of utility and comfort to beauty and ornament.

tenants are dependent upon an unscrupulous agent for their well-being. The moral responsibilities of the landowner take second place to the wish for ornament. Accomplishments finally appear to be analogous to the ornamental aspect of landscape improvements, but Jane Austen weighs carefully their possible moral merits and demerits. The analogy between such accomplishments and landscape improvements is marked in the respective ties with art and nature of music and riding in Mansfield Park.

Mary Crawford and Maria and Julia Bertram are accomplished both in music and riding, and their uses of them reveal the possibility of such talents becoming demerits. Their music and riding are made to embody their selfish vanity. They use their talents to assert their claims to superiority, to feed their egos. Their riding offers a very explicit example of their selfishness. All three young women are required at some point to sacrifice in some measure their personal pleasure in riding; all refuse to do so.

Mary finds that riding is a sort of country accomplishment, and her natural merit in riding makes it especially attractive to her. Not only does she enjoy the exercise and the intimacy it cultivates with Edmund, it feeds her vanity: "...to the pure genuine pleasure of the exercise, something was probably added in Edmund's attendance and instructions, and something more in the conviction of very much surpassing her sex in general by her early progress..." (MP 66-7). That the pure enjoyment is enhanced by Edmund is of course no demerit, but the gratification of personal vanity by a display of her superiority as a horsewoman vitiates the pleasure. The sense of superiority born of a talent for music and riding informs her confidence that her own opinions are always correct, her values are the best.

The selfishness born of vanity becomes apparent when Fanny's need to ride interferes with the pleasures of Maria, Julia and Mary. Upon the death of the grey pony, Mrs. Norris says that Maria and Julia will let Fanny use their horses when they do not want them, but "as the Miss Bertrams regularly wanted their horses every fine day, and had no idea of carrying their obliging manners to the sacrifice of any real pleasure, that time of course never came" (MP 36). Mary Crawford exhibits the same selfishness when she keeps Fanny's mare longer than she ought and then when she usurps the mare altogether. The moral crux is emphasized by Fanny's motives for riding: she does not ride for reasons of vanity, or even just for pleasure; the exercise is essential to maintaining her good health.

That Mary Crawford holds ornament and her own personal pleasure above the demands of nature that sometimes require the sacrifice of personal pleasure, is emphasized in her conversation with Edmund about the problems of getting her harp. Mary gives priority to the self and believes that money ought to guarantee that priority. She refuses to understand that despite the offer of money, the farmers must get in the hay rather than indulge her personal whim. The power of nature, manifested in the uncertainty of the weather, dictates its priority over the power with which Mary's money invests her. Nature makes the farmers' refusal a matter of necessity, not of whim or custom, as she believes. Even when Edmund explains the practical reason for the farmers' refusal - the risk of losing part of the harvest - Mary steadfastly refuses to understand. She sets down their refusal to irrational, groundless custom. The laws of nature, the imperatives of nature, are nothing to Mary. For her, nature like music exists only as a source of her own pleasure and

self-gratification; she is blind to its other possible uses and to its demands.

Marianne Dashwood turns her musical talent to a form of self-indulgence. When Willoughby is with her, music is a function of their romantic pleasures; but when he goes away, rather than using music to carry her out of herself, she uses it to heighten her sense of loss, to feed her own grief:

> She played over every favourite song that she had been used to play to Willoughby, every air in which their voices had been oftenest joined, and sat at the instrument gazing on every line of music that he had written out for her, till her heart was so heavy that no farther sadness could be gained; and this nourishment of grief was every day applied. She spent whole hours at the pianoforté alternately singing and crying; her voice often totally suspended by her tears. In books too, as well as in music, she courted the misery which a contrast between the past and present was certain of giving. She read nothing but what they had been used to read together (SS 83).

The difference between Mary Crawford and Marianne lies in the different aspects of the self that they choose to indulge: Marianne glorifies her feelings; Mary the superiority of wealth. Both are cut off from a just comprehension of the external world. Jane Austen is more sympathetic to an overvaluing of one's feelings than to an overvaluing of money. John Dashwood abuses his reason by using it to justify his lack of real feeling for his half-sisters and their mother, and his failure to fulfil his promise to his father to give them his support. One does not find the meanness in Mary that one finds in John Dashwood, but their values are nonetheless grounded in the same erroneous idea: that worth can only be calculated in terms of money.

Marianne surrenders herself to nature, and Mary ignores nature; but the powers of nature abide. The power of accomplishments, unless they are cultivated as a beneficial part of nature,

is transient and superficial. The evening following Sir Thomas' return from Antigua, music provides the illusion of harmony at Mansfield: "The evening passed with external smoothness, though almost every mind was ruffled; and the music which Sir Thomas called for from his daughters helped to conceal the want of real harmony" (MP 191). Later Mary's music signifies her retreat from the new values that her affection for Edmund is opening to her and reaffirms her mercenary values. When she learns that Edmund is soon to be ordained and that his income is to be only seven hundred a year, she is "too much vexed... to be in a humour for anything but music. With that, she soothed herself and amused her friend" (MP 227). In both instances music gives the consolation derived from obscuring the truth, the immediate illusion of an order which has no staying power. The chaos at Mansfield cannot long be checked by the harmony of music, and Mary's music and money cannot sustain indefinitely her complacency.

Jane Austen shows both Mary's virtues - her strength, vitality, liveliness and cleverness - and her weaknesses - her vanity, her insistence on her own priority - through her music and riding. By trying to make artifice and nature serve the self she renders nearly powerless the natural advantages she possesses. Emma's drawing skills provide a similarly dual view. Emma distorts nature in her drawing of Harriet by making the girl appear taller than she is, which conforms to Emma's fancy regarding Harriet's birth: she is not quite so high as Emma has claimed! Emma knows that she has not been guided by nature in her drawing, even though she will not admit it to Mr. Knightley, who points out the fault. But she does not perceive that she has equally distorted the truth about Harriet's parentage. We see that Emma does not <u>try</u> to deceive herself, although she tries to deceive others, and that

she is convinced that her guesses are always correct. When she distorts nature, she believes that her ends (in this case, the enhancement of Harriet in the eyes of Mr. Elton) justify her means. Emma and Marianne both ultimately realize how seriously they have jeopardized their own happiness and that of other people by their abuse of nature through a misapplication of accomplishments. But Mary Crawford can only place the blame for her unhappiness on having fallen in love with a younger son, a man without fortune.

Emma, Marianne, and Mary Crawford suffer from the limitations of their vision, the failure of their vision to encompass the truth. Emma accepts as truth only that which she knows unequivocally to be true and that which she imagines to be true from her own observations. She summarily dismisses Mr. Knightley's suggestion of some secret intimacy between Frank and Jane, because she is determined to believe her perception superior to that of anyone else. Not only does this limit her comprehension of the truth, but, since her assurance of the validity of her own observation and imagination is the source of her vanity, she leaves herself open to being considerably mortified when truths are revealed. Marianne excludes the ordinary parts of life that cannot provide frissons of delight on which her feelings feed. When she is showing the beauties of Barton valley to Edward, she is disdainful of his observation that the lanes are muddy and asks with genuine incomprehension how he can notice anything so prosaic with such objects of beauty before him. Edward replies: "'Because...among the rest of the objects before me, I see a very dirty lane'" (SS 88). Marianne sees only the part of nature that gratifies her sensibilities, ignores all other aspects of nature, and does not distinguish between nature's beneficial and

destructive sides. Mary Crawford is even more restricted than Marianne. To Fanny's remarks on the wonderous changes time and the exertions of the Grants have made on the shrubbery at the parsonage, and on the splendid variety of nature, Mary can only answer: "'To say the truth... I am something like the famous Doge at the court of Lewis XIV; and may declare that I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it'" (MP 209-10). Marianne is limited in that she will allow herself to see and value only the poetic parts of nature, but Mary sees only herself, only her personal presence gives meaning to nature. The most powerful egoism leads her to see herself always at the centre of things, and often she can see nothing beyond herself.

The most common limitation is a refusal to perceive that responses to nature are as various as nature itself. Emma and Marianne want everyone to see things as they do, a fault they share, despite their intelligence, with the obtuse Mr.Woodhouse, who believes everyone of as weak a constitution as himself and is "never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself" (E 8). Marianne "expected from other people the same opinions and feelings as her own, and she judged of their motives by the immediate effect of their actions on herself" (SS 202). Mary Crawford shows the same limitation in her assumption that Fanny is bored by looking at the house at Sotherton, and more seriously when she thinks Fanny will share her delight at the prospect of Edmund's becoming the Bertram heir. Maria and Julia, like Marianne, can only admire people who are like themselves, hence their praise of Mary Crawford's riding skills: "Her merit in being gifted by nature with strength and courage was fully appreciated by the Miss Bertrams; her delight in riding was like their own; her early excellence in it was like their own, and they had great pleasure in praising it" (MP 69).

The destructiveness of the blindness to any but one's own response to nature finds concise expression in the minor but resonant incident of Fanny's day with her aunts while the other young people are out riding. Fanny's health is already undermined by the deprivation of the exercise of riding, but she is weakened to the point of being incapacitated by the demands made by her aunts. The day is so fine that even Lady Bertram ventures out and sits in a shady alcove while Fanny stoops in the full sun cutting roses, which she then has to carry to the White house for Mrs. Norris and go yet a second time because she forgot to lock the door of the room where she put the roses. Mrs. Norris' hardiness makes her unable to imagine that anyone has not her own strength. She makes no concession to her awareness of Fanny's frailer constitution. Lady Bertram is, as Jane Austen remarks earlier, "one of those persons who think nothing can be dangerous or difficult, or fatiguing to any body but themselves" (MP 32). She openly admits the evils of the heat, but apprehends danger to no one but herself. She is not surprised that Fanny is ill, but the idea of protecting Fanny as she protected herself never occurred to her. Lady Bertram and Mrs. Norris are bound by their personal responses to nature, have no objective comprehension of the powers of nature and the effect of these powers on anyone but themselves.[29]

The abuse of nature is an explicit and recurring theme in <u>Pride and Prejudice</u>, <u>Sense and Sensibility</u> and <u>Mansfield Park</u>. Mrs. Bennet tries to use nature but is without a regard for the

[29]The three Ward sisters, including Mrs. Price, are all in different ways the dupes of nature. Mrs. Price is ruled by her passion and has more children than she can cope with; Mrs. Norris has no children to provide her with proper objects of "needful solicitude" and so transfers all her powers of planning and attention to money; and Lady Bertram thinks her duty is done when she manages to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram with her beauty.

extent of its powers or the possible evil that can result from a haphazard use of them. She sends Jane to Netherfield on horseback because she expects rain to keep her from being able to return home at the appointed time. Jane is detained at Netherfield, not because it is raining when she should leave, but because it rains during her ride to Netherfield and as a result she catches cold. A superficial view indicates Mrs. Bennet's scheme is successful, but she does not mean for Jane to be kept at Netherfield by illness. Mrs. Bennet is utterly irresponsible, rejoicing in the success of her plan so much that one would think her design was to make Jane ill. She never understands the destructive possibilities of Jane's illness, never considers her own responsibility for putting her daughter in such danger. That Jane Austen means the reader to consider the incident as reflecting more than the silly scheming of a stupid woman is later emphasized by the results of Mrs. Bennet's disregard - even encouragement - of Lydia's wildness.

The evil that can result from the abuse and misuse of nature is more explicit in Sense and Sensibility and Mansfield Park. Marianne Dashwood weakens herself by her over-indulgence in her feelings, but her exposure of herself to the forces of material nature finally almost destroy her:

> Two delightful twilight walks on the third and fourth evenings of her being there, not merely on the dry gravel of the shrubbery, but all over the grounds, and especially in the most distant parts of them, where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, where the trees were the oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest, had - assisted by the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings - given Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments, on the concern of every body, and the notice of herself (SS 305-6).

Marianne acknowledges her responsibility for her illness: "'My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died, - it would have been self-destruction" (SS 345).[30] Tom Bertram also surrenders himself to the destructive powers of nature, though not with the same consciousness of what he is doing. Tom ignores nature in his pursuit of pleasure. He abuses his good health in an over-indulgence in drink, which leads to a fall, which brings on a fever that nearly kills him. His decline is associated with horses - he is at Newmarket - which in turn connects with the use his sisters and Mary Crawford make of horses, just as they and Marianne use music, for their own selfish indulgences. The misuse of pleasures, such as riding, racing and music, has not the power to threaten their lives, but personal pleasures and gratifications lead them, like Mrs. Bennet, to take no cognizance of the dangers of nature when they are using nature as a means of achieving their own selfish ends.

Jane Austen's view of the utility of accomplishments is not, of course, all negative. In a conversation at Rosings Elizabeth Bennet compares improving oneself to learning to play the piano. She asks Darcy why he fails to "'recommend [himself] to strangers'" (PP 175). Colonel Fitzwilliam says that Darcy is at fault "'because he will not give himself the trouble'" (PP 175). Darcy defends himself: "'I certainly do not have the talent which some people possess...of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done'" (PP 175).

[30]For excellent discussions of Marianne's abuse of nature - and of her own nature - see Moler, pp.63-6, and Tave, pp.89-90.

Elizabeth sees the analogy between this and her musical accomplishment: "'My fingers...do not move over this instrument in the masterly manner which I see so many women's do. They have not the same force or rapidity, and do not produce the same expression. But then I have always supposed it to be my own fault - because I would not take the trouble of practising. It is not that I do not believe my fingers as capable as any other woman's of superior execution'" (PP 175). Here is what one can most admire in Lizzy. She has the proper understanding of her own abilities, the proper self-confidence to know her capabilities, and the good sense not to pretend that she has merits that she has not or to excuse her demerits by saying that she has some natural defect that makes improvement impossible. Discipline is required to make oneself agreeable to other people, to be able to enter into their concerns, just as it is to become an accomplished musician.

Accomplishments, then, not only give pleasure to oneself and others, but develop, when properly cultivated, a habit of discipline that has an analogue in one's relationship to other people. Elinor Dashwood's use of accomplishments when Edward leaves Barton contrasts with that of Marianne when Willoughby leaves:

> But as it was her determination to subdue [her despondancy], and to prevent herself from appearing to suffer more than what all her family suffered on his going away, she did not adopt the method so judiciously employed by Marianne, on a similar occasion, to augment and fix her sorrow, by seeking silence, solitude, and idleness. Their means were as different as their objects, and equally suited to the advancement of each.
>
> Elinor sat down to her drawing-table as soon as he was out of the house, busily employed herself the whole day, neither sought nor avoided the mention of his name, appeared to interest

> herself almost as much as ever in the general concerns of the family, and if, by this conduct, she did not lessen her own grief, it was at least prevented from unnecessary increase, and her mother and sisters were spared much solicitude on her account (SS 104).

Jane Austen does not condemn Marianne for feeling grief, but she is careful to distinguish how much of the grief is natural and how much of it is fanciful self-indulgence. In this novel she can recommend the power of accomplishments in helping to overcome the self, but she seems later to have grown more distrustful of accomplishments, to have realized that although accomplishments can have a useful function, they too easily and too frequently lend themselves to the misuses of narrow and selfish vision. In Emma and Persuasion there is no question of whether accomplishments are beneficial or destructive: they are simply lighter talents that give pleasure but are not to be counted on to reflect any deeper merit or to offer any sound support in sustaining right conduct.

Jane Austen suggests in Fanny Price a means by which one may be carried out of oneself without having the advantages of music or drawing masters: an attention to material nature. Fanny finds in the contemplation of nature the same support and consolation of a release from the self that Elinor Dashwood finds in drawing. During the ride to Sotherton Fanny is thus described: "Her own thoughts and reflections were habitually her best companions; and in observing the appearance of the country, the bearings of the roads, the difference of soil, the state of the harvest, the cottages, the cattle, the children, she found entertainment that could only have been heightened by having Edmund to speak to of what she felt" (MP 80). She is carried out of herself during the drive, whereas the others are more or less blinded by the prospect of their own personal

concerns. Maria notices nothing, save her sister seated next to Henry Crawford, until they approach Sotherton, where she finds something in the external world which she is able to connect with her own worth, her own superiority. Only then does the natural world attract her attention. Fanny later shows a real interest in and imaginative response to nature again when she and Mary walk in the shrubbery at the parsonage. Fanny's taste for nature is expansive. She can leave the shrubbery and take equal delight in hearing Mary play the harp, but Mary's musical interests and riding skills have not, through her own fault, led her to expand her vision to encompass the kind of pleasure Fanny takes in nature. As Lizzy Bennet would understand, the fault is not in Mary's ability, but in her failure to try to comprehend things external to herself. Fanny does not have an inbred affinity with nature any more than Mary does with money - or the artifice that signifies money to her. As Edmund and Fanny look out at the beauties of Mansfield Park at dusk, he says that "'they are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel in some degree as you do - who have not at least been given a taste for nature in early life'" (MP 113). A selfless admiration for nature as a paradigm of both all perfection and all imperfection is the basis for a proper taste for music, drawing and even riding. But above all for a proper respect for the variety of feelings and opinions found in human nature.

Most of Jane Austen's heroes and heroines have to learn to go out of themselves, to transcend their personal limitations. Anne Elliot is unique in that she has achieved the requisite selflessness before the novel begins; she waits only for the chance to perfect her personal happiness, that state beyond cheerfulness, usefulness, and attention to the needs of others,

however unworthy of attention they might be. Anne has achieved the unselfish objectivity and the personal strength of mind that Fanny Price strives for but, because of her youth and inexperience, does not perfectly achieve in the course of the novel. Fanny has occasional lapses into jealousy, into feelings of self-pitying inferiority, and even into dogmatic beliefs that are more personal desire than reality, such as her conviction that Mary Crawford is incapable of change, incapable of even justly valuing Edmund's affection and principles. These lapses are the imperfections that set off the value of the virtues she has attained through the exertion to overcome the self. Her imperfections no doubt kept Jane Austen from saying of her, as she did of Anne Elliot, to her niece: "You may perhaps like the Heroine, as she is almost too good for me" (L 487). In the Sotherton sequence of Mansfield Park Jane Austen shows Fanny's selfless vision of things without compromising an objective understanding of the personal weakness that threatens Fanny's happiness. The selflessness that has in part grown out of Fanny's natural timidity and feelings of inferiority has now become a danger to herself, barring her from a just insistence upon her own right to attention and consideration, her own right to act in the way her conscience, rather than the whim of others, dictates.

Fanny is peripheral to the action of the Sotherton sequence, as is proper to her passive state at that point in the novel. But her intelligence and judgment are at the centre of things. She sees the dilapidations of the day more clearly and completely than anyone else. Through her eyes we comprehend the irony in which the sequence is grounded; the party has come to Sotherton to plan improvements but in fact most of them are developing schemes that are destructive. Fanny's place at the centre of the sequence - literally when she is seated on the bench - is

ironic, becauseshe is the least self-centred of all the characters.[31] She is the least debilitated by her own pains and dissatisfactions. The others participate only in their own feelings, but Fanny transcends her feelings. Her awareness of and attentiveness to things outside herself liberates her from the selfish restrictions of her own concerns. She suffers the neglect of Mary and Edmund as much as Julia and Rushworth suffer that of Maria and Crawford, but their disregard for her feelings leave them entrapped by their own pain, while Fanny's personal dissatisfactions do not loom so large in her mind, because they exist there with her comprehension of and attention to the pains of Rushworth and Julia.

Edmund and Mary leave Fanny alone for longer than she expects, a pattern of neglect that is no less painful because of its growing familiarity. Maria for a moment recognizes that Fanny has cause for dissatisfaction, but she soon, in her exhilaration at being rid of Rushworth and left with Crawford, forgets Fanny. She and Crawford converse as though Fanny were not even present, and when they decide to slip through the gate and into the park, neither seems to think of asking Fanny to join them: they are too concerned with their own gratification to consider hers. Fanny's observation of their selfishness enables her to understand and sympathize with the pains of Julia and Rushworth.

Julia is so full of her own vexations at having been neglected by Crawford - though she attributes her annoyance to having been forced to stay with Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Rushworth - that she cannot even pretend to be concerned for Fanny. On the contrary, Julia's need to express her anger makes her accuse

[31] Tony Tanner, "Jane Austen and 'the Quiet Thing'," in Critical Essays, ed. B.C. Southam, pp.150-52, provides a provocative analysis of the gate scene.

Fanny of having nothing but pleasure: "Such a penance as I have been enduring, while you were sitting here so composed and so happy! It might have been as well, perhaps, if you had been in my place, but you always contrive to keep out of these scrapes" (MP 100). With no more show of interest in Fanny's predicament, she slips through the gate in pursuit of Maria and Crawford. Our response to Rushworth is perhaps more sympathetic than to Julia. Jane Austen gains our sympathy by making us feel how uncomfortable Rushworth is in his own stupidity. He gropes about in the darkness of his mind trying to find out why his fiancée has not waited for him and why he so much dislikes Crawford. In sympathizing with him, we are able to understand what Fanny also feels for him. If we could not respond with sympathy, we would be left suspicious of the truth of Fanny's feelings. But Jane Austen does not let us dwell too long in unalloyed sympathy for Rushworth. Nor is Fanny deluded by her sympathy. Stupidity does not exclude selfishness and vanity. Fanny urges him to follow the others, because they cannot settle on any improvements without him. He is struck by the idea, the reminder of his own importance, and he walks away, apparently without considering for a moment the possibility of asking Fanny to join him. Only Fanny is able to look out from herself, to enter into the feelings of the others, feelings she cannot always approve, and to estimate justly their merits and demerits.

Fanny Price's cultivation of a selfless attention to nature, of observing and considering the world external to herself, parallels her ability to perceive other people as they exist independently of herself. Jane Austen's attempt to make her novels a proper and true reflection of nature suggests that she believed that a selfless attention to art provides the same

benefits. She might have had scruples about explicitly making such a claim in her work, though she does indicate, as I discussed in my introduction, the way in which art can be annexed to the self, can be abused in a way similar to that in which nature is abused. Art and nature, when properly attended, intersect in their common power to take one out of oneself and into the external world. John Bayley notes that Jane Austen's genius lies in part in her capacity to convey a sense of the characters' independence to the readers, which allows us "to feel...how other people feel; to relax inside their limitations; to acquiesce briefly in the bonds of their temperament; to surrender for a moment our own modes of judging, perceiving, and desiring."[32] Her art allows the reader that pleasure which Fanny Price understands one can gain through attending to "the sublimity of Nature" (MP 113): the being taken out of oneself. Although the ability to ride, to draw, to play a musical instrument can offer the means for enjoying art and nature, for understanding something of the world external to the self, Jane Austen realized that the danger of these accomplishments lay in their becoming ends in themselves, no more than sparkle and polish for the glorified ego.

[32]John Bayley, "The 'Irresponsibility' of Jane Austen", in Critical Essays, ed. B.C. Southam, p.5.

Chapter II: Social Form

1: Manners

Jane Austen understood moral law as static and unchanging, but, as the advertisement to Northanger Abbey indicates, she saw manners as being a part of the inevitably changing surface of life: "The public are entreated to bear in mind that thirteen years have passed since [Northanger Abbey] was finished, many more since it was begun, and that during that period, places, manners, books, and opinions have undergone considerable changes" (NA 12). This is not to say that manners have no connection to morals. Lionel Trilling has remarked: "The great novelists knew that manners indicate the largest intentions of men's souls as well as the smallest and they are perpetually concerned to catch the meaning of every dim implicit hint."[1] The manners of which Trilling speaks and which Jane Austen recorded are not necessarily a rigid social code, but rather the individual's complex and various modes of expression, either in words of action.[2] Manners which conform to the dictates of social refinement are by no means finally Jane Austen's standard for good manners. Her

[1] Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals and the Novel", in The Liberal Imagination (New York: Viking, 1950) pp. 211-2.

[2] Howard S. Babb, Jane Austen's Novels: The Fabric of Dialogue (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), remarks that "manners are the very habits of man's being, social man or private man, and rooted in human experience. If as public gestures they are therefore formal to a degree and codify the values of society, we must never forget that they are at the same time inevitably charged with the values of the individual, because by means of them he expresses his private experience," p.5. Jane Nardin, Those Elegant Decorums (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973) takes a somewhat different view of manners, dividing them between the socially acceptable rules of behaviour and the morally acceptable. See especially pp. 14-5.

standard is closer to the dictates of moral principles, but even here we have not come to the centre of her understanding, the force she believes vitalizes both manners and morals: right feeling, the dictates of the unselfish heart.

According to criticism of the last decade, Jane Austen's principal interest lies not in manners but in conduct, in moral law rather than in social form, as Edmund Bertram distinguishes when he describes the duties of a clergyman: "'And with regard to their influencing public manners, Miss Crawford must not misunderstand me, or suppose I mean to call them the arbiters of good breeding, the regulators of refinement and curtesy, the masters of the ceremonies of life. The manners I speak of, might rather be called conduct, perhaps, the result of good principles...'" (MP 93). This passage is usually taken to signify Jane Austen's own concern with morals rather than manners.[3] But one should not, I think, confuse Jane Austen's conception of the duties of a clergyman with her conception of her own duties as an artist. Although her vision encompasses the clergyman's moral concerns, it also includes the social arbiter's interest in social form. Jane Austen's first concern is not the principles of conduct or of manners, but rather the feelings, the dictates of the human heart, from which both moral and social principles are meant to be derived. Both good manners and sound principles can, at their best, give form to the dictates of the uncorrupted heart.

The most disputed passage in Jane Austen's work, which taken

3 See, for example, David Lodge, "The Vocabulary of Mansfield Park", in Language of Fiction (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) pp.275-6.

in toto[4] seems to me to be quite clear, implies that feelings, not principles, are the first source of right action; rational principles are only guide-posts and safeguards to fallible human feelings: "How evidently was there a gross want of feeling and humanity where his own pleasure was concerned - And alas! how always known no principle to supply as a duty what the heart was deficient in" (MP 329). Henry Crawford's primary failure is his putting his own pleasure above a respect for the feelings of others. His secondary failure is his lack of principles, which could have taught him to know rationally what was due the feelings of others. Catherine Morland is ignorant and often silly, has no real rational guide to good conduct, no abstract principles to teach her moral distinctions. But she possesses good, unselfish feelings that support her right conduct. Henry Tilney marks her excellent qualities: "'You feel, as you always do, what is most to the credit of human nature'" (NA 207), and later with his usual comic turn, "'But your mind is warped by an innate principle of general integrity, and therefore not accessible to the cool reasonings of family partiality, or a desire of revenge'" (NA 219). Catherine's innate principle of general integrity is her good feeling. Persuasion is a suitable companion for Northanger Abbey because Anne Elliot, however superior her rational understanding is to Catherine's, shares with Catherine the good feelings that are the natural source of right principles.

Without the vitality supplied by right feeling, principles and manners are in danger of having no real meaning. Maria, Julia and Tom Bertram take their father's moral gravity as a sign of

[4]Following the example of Chapman's note, most discussions consider on the part of the passage following the dash. But the dash indicates that what follows clarifies and amplifies what precedes the dash.

his having no affection for them. They dislike his coldness, repress their flow of spirits in his presence, and associate his principles with the irrational disapproval of all their pleasures. Their manners lead him to believe they adhere to his principles, but the manners are but a veneer, empty forms, differing from those of Mr. Collins in being more polished, less obtrusive. Collins' manners and morals are a matter of rote learning, are no more informed by true understanding than those catalogues of the kings of England and the Roman emperors that are marks the superiority of the minds of Maria and Julia. But whereas the artificiality of Mr. Collins' manners makes him comic and ridiculous, the manners of Maria and Julia are more deceptive: "The Miss Bertrams were now fully established among the belles of the neighbourhood; and as they joined to beauty and brilliant acquirements, a manner naturally easy, and carefully formed to general civility and obligingness, they possessed its favour as well as its admiration" (MP 34). Manners, though ideally dictated by good principles and feelings, are actually only forms that are independent of meaning and can consequently exist without the meaning they are supposed to embody. They are important not only for what they reveal but for what they conceal. When Jane Austen remarks that "the manners of both [Mary and Henry Crawford] were lively and pleasant, and Mrs. Grant immediately gave them credit for every thing else" (MP 42), she is not condemning the manners of the Crawfords; she is hinting at the limitations of manners themselves and of the judgment of Mrs. Grant. She does not disapprove of lively and pleasant manners; she disapproves of the lack of good principles and feelings for others that such manners can conceal.

Moral principles are similar to manners in that they can be reduced to vacant forms and become in consequence virtually

meaningless. Principles without the animation of feeling attract Jane Austen's ridicule nearly as much as manners that are neither animated by feeling nor supported by principles. In Pride and Prejudice Mary Bennet and Mr. Collins have learned by rote rules of "threadbare morality" (PP 60) uninformed by genuine good feeling. Mary's emotions are not even animated by the possible ruin of her own sister:

> 'This is a most unfortunate affair; and will probably be much talked of. But we must stem the tide of malice, and pour into the wounded bosoms of each other, the balm of sisterly consolation....
>
> 'Unhappy as the event must be for Lydia, we may draw from it this useful lesson; that loss of virtue in a female is irretrievable - that one false step involves her in endless ruin - that her reputation is no less brittle than it is beautiful, - and that she cannot be too much guarded in her behaviour towards the undeserving of the other sex.' (PP 289)

Mary reduces the misconduct of her sister to moralistic cant, matched only by that of Mr. Collins in his letter to Mr. Bennet on the same occasion. Without any comprehension of paternal affection, he can say with confidence: "'Let me advise you then, my dear Sir, to console yourself as much as possible, to throw off your unworthy child from your affection for ever, and leave her to reap the fruits of her own heinous offence'" (PP 297). Jane Austen has been accused of later adopting, through the character of Sir Thomas Bertram, the attitude of Mr. Collins.[5] But Sir Thomas neither throws Maria off nor leaves her to "reap the fruits" of her offence. He will not sanction her wrong conduct by restoring her to the family from which she has of her own volition alienated herself: "As a daughter - he hoped a penitent one - she should be protected by him, and secured in

[5]Cf. Darrel Mansell, The Novels of Jane Austen (London: Macmillan, 1973) pp.143-4.

every comfort, and supported by every encouragement to do right, which their relative situations admitted; but farther than that, he would not go. Maria had destroyed her own character, and he would not by a vain attempt to restore what never could be restored, be affording his sanction to vice, or in seeking to lessen its disgrace..." (MP 465). Sir Thomas' principles give him a rational understanding of the gravity of his daughter's conduct, but those principles are animated by paternal affection, which prompts him to do all in his power to insure her comfort and promote her right conduct without minimizing her wrong doing. When he realizes that "active principle" has been missing from the education of Maria and Julia, we are able to understand that "active principle" comprehends principles with the vitality provided by unselfish affection. This contrasts with the inert theoretical principles which have failed to support and guide Maria's conduct. One of the terrible ironies of Mansfield Park lies in our seeing in Sir Thomas' final attitude towards Maria the first evidence of real feeling for her, the first evidence that his own principles, which have seemed so cold and unaffectionate to his own children, are in fact animated by his heart.

The valuing of form over the principles and feelings which proper form is meant to embody seems to be a particular pitfall of rank. Such an erroneous sense of the worth of rank can give rise to a corresponding fault in thinking form more valuable than meaning. Even worse, one can believe that high rank justifies both form and meaning, whatever they may be. Sir Thomas Bertram has succeeded in teaching his children correct manners but without the necessary understanding of the principles from which they arise, which comes only from a proper comprehension of the right feeling that dictates the principles: "The politeness which [Julia] had been brought up to practise as a duty, made it impossible for her

to escape [from Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Rushworth]; while the want of that higher species of self-command, that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart, that principle of right which had not formed any essential part of her education, made her miserable under it" (MP 91). But Lady Catherine de Bourgh does not even bother to practise the politeness that is the essence of good-breeding. She may not be, strictly speaking, unprincipled, but she is both rude and unfeeling. She maintains that her "'character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness'" (PP 353), which is but a self-deceived way of saying that she believes her opinion ought to be heard, regardless of the pain she inflicts. She uses her rank to justify her lack of manners, her imposing herself rudely and uncivilly upon others. Darcy at first seems to share his aunt's belief that rank is its own justification, that the manners of people of rank cannot be called into question. But by the end of the novel he has realized that rank is no more guarantee of gentility than money is. Lady Catherine's vulgarity is fully equal to that of any of the Bennets. Darcy values the principles, the duties he associates with his rank, and his love for Elizabeth, his coming to know the Gardiners through her, teaches him a greater respect for the feelings of everyone.

Like Darcy, Emma Woodhouse possesses sound principles and usually good feelings, but she allows her rank to interfere with the proper conduct dictated by what she knows is right, both rationally and in her heart. She is bored and irritated by Miss Bates and uses the fear of inferior associations as an excuse for neglecting the spinster and her mother: "[Emma] had had many a hint from Mr. Knightley and some from her own heart, as to her deficiency - but none were equal to counteract the persuasion of its being very disagreeable, - a waste of time - tiresome women -

and all the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second and third rate of Highbury..." (E 155). Emma's true motives are those first given - that the Bateses are disagreeable and tiresome to her, not worth her attention - and what she personally dislikes is justified in her own mind by the privileges of her rank, by her insistence upon maintaining her rank. Emma undergoes a change similar to Darcy's. Her love for Mr. Knightley animates her general affection, though her principles have earlier shown her her error. She begins to participate in his own habits of attentiveness to others. Only then does Emma move from an artificial and rigid conception of rank to a proper value of feelings, a standard of worth based on good will rather than on rank and the refinements of rank.

Mr. Knightley does not exalt rank or make the mistake of thinking outward form, so closely associated with rank, a reflection of moral character. It is Emma who is prone to take the surface as a reflection of the whole. Mr. Knightley says of Frank Churchill: "'I should be as ready to acknowledge his merits as any other man; but I hear of none, except what are merely personal; that he is well grown and good-looking, with smooth, plausible manners'" (E 149). Jane Fairfax delivers a similar opinion when she claims only to know Frank's manners, which "'were all that could be safely judged of...'" (E 169). She does of course know more - or <u>thinks</u> she knows more - of his character than what is indicated by his manners.[6] But the essential point here is that she uses what she assumes will be immediately acknowledged as truth - that manners are not a reliable index of a man's whole character - to excuse herself from having to say more about Frank. Emma, Mr. Grant and the Bertrams are all duped by their failure to understand fully

[6] Mary Crawford, whose manners derive neither from feeling or principles, at first admires Tom Bertram more than she does Edmund, because the former has the manners of the London world, all easy refinement and polish. She begins to value Edmund's manners properly when she senses, rather than understands, the pleasure she has in his company.

the unrealiability of personal manners, which is, as Mr.Knightley implies, very similar to the unreliability of physical appearance an index to moral character.

Physical beauty and wealth can, as we saw in Chapter I, give rise to false values, but these outward signs do not have power so great as manners. Where beauty and money might only inspire admiration, awe or envy, manners can make a person agreeable. When Darcy and Bingley attend the ball at Meryton, they are first judged by appearance, then by manners: "The gentlemen pronounced [Darcy] to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr. Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend" (PP 10). The reverse occurs regarding Henry Crawford. When Maria and Julia first see him, he is pronounced "absolutely plain, black and plain; but still he was the gentleman with a pleasing address" (MP 44). The second meeting proves him still plain, but with "so much countenance, and his teeth were so good, and he was so well made, that one soon forgot he was plain..." (MP 44). After the third meeting, Julia and Maria will allow no one to call him plain. Crawford's ability to blind them to his physical appearance lies in his manners, which are designed to charm, to flatter, to feed the vanity of young women. Mrs. Clay works according to the same principles of flattery: "Mrs. Clay had freckles, and a projecting tooth, and a clumsy wrist, which [Sir Walter] was continually making severe remarks upon, in her absence; but she was young, and certainly altogether well-looking, and possessed in

an acute mind and assiduously pleasing manners, infinitely more dangerous attractions than any merely personal might have been" (P 34). Anne Elliot perceives precisely where the danger lies: "'There is hardly any personal defect...which an agreeable manner might not gradually reconcile one to'" (P 35).[7] Elinor Dashwood feels the influence of a deeper power than that of mere flattery, the power of charming qualities which make one wish to place greater value on such charm and agreeableness than is merited:

> Willoughby, he, whom only half an hour ago she had abhorred as the most worthless of men, Willoughby, in spite of all his faults, excited a degree of commiseration for the sufferings produced by them, which made her think of him as now separated forever from her family, with tenderness, a regret, rather in proportion, as she soon acknowledged within herself - to his wishes than to his merits. She felt that his influence over her mind was heightened...by that person of uncommon attraction, that open, affectionate, and lively manner which it was no merit to possess.... But she felt that it was so, long, long before she could feel his influence less (SS 333).

Even when one is perfectly aware of grave moral faults, the power of open, affectionate, lively manners is great and difficult to reckon with.[8]

Jane Austen justly balances her picture of the unreliability of smooth, lively manners, by showing that manners less pleasing are also sometimes unreliable. This unreliability is marked in the swift change in Darcy's popularity in the Meryton ballroom. Lizzy Bennet later realizes that she had judged Darcy's manners as wrongly as she did Wickham's, that "proud and repulsive as were [Darcy's] manners, she had never, in the whole course of their acquaintance...seen any thing that betrayed him to be

[7]For a discussion on the power of flattery, see Barbara Hardy, A Reading of Jane Austen (London: Peter Owen, 1975) pp.122-3. Professor Hardy deals with those arch-flatterers, the Steele sisters.

[8]Mudrick takes the implications of this passage to an extreme, claiming that here Elinor is "quite amorally in love" (p.85) with Willoughby.

unprincipled or unjust - any thing that spoke him of irreligious or immoral habits" (PP 207). Darcy's defect is his pride, a sense of superiority that makes him reserved and keeps him from allowing others to know his true character. Fanny Price and Edward Ferrars are as reserved as Darcy, but theirs stems from the opposite source. Fanny's humility, her sense of her own worthlessness, makes her afraid to give her opinion and keeps everyone but Edmund, who particularly exerts himself, from knowing her real worth. Edward Ferrars is "not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart" (SS 15). Darcy learns the proper proportions for pride - that is, the point beyond which his pride is a demerit. Edward does not undergo any real change in the course of the novel, but he does finally determine to follow his own inclinations rather than continue to submit to the dictates of his mother, who has wielded power over him in part because of his being too timid to pursue his own desires.[9] Fanny Price's change is similar to Edward's, but is shown in much more detail. She does not experience a moral awakening but a social one; she learns to have confidence in her own manners, to be reasonably at ease in company and to exert herself when necessary.

A fault in one's manners, be it the lively charm that masks a hard heart and the lack of sound principles, or a sombre reserve that hides a kind heart and good principles, reveals not only personal limitations of varying degrees of seriousness, but leaves one vulnerable to misuse by other people. Willoughby is attracted by Marianne's "'lovely person and interesting manners'" (SS 319),

[9]Mudrick suggests that the attention Edward and Colonel Brandon give to form makes them "insipid social figures" p.86.

manners that encourage him to conform to her behaviour without any of the feelings those manners signify to Marianne. She in turn takes gross advantage of Mrs. Jennings' generosity and kindness:

> [Marianne] sat in silence almost all the way, wrapt in her own meditations, and scarcely ever voluntarily speaking, except when any object of picturesque beauty within their view drew from her an exclamation of delight exclusively addressed to her sister. To atone for this conduct therefore, Elinor took immediate possession of the post of civility which she had assigned herself, behaved with the greatest attention to Mrs. Jennings, talked with her, laughed with her, and listened to her whenever she could; and Mrs. Jennings on her side treated them both with all possible kindness.... (SS 160)

Marianne's disregard for what is due Mrs. Jennings parallels Willoughby's for what is due Marianne. He takes advantage of her romantic nature, uses her manners for his own selfish gratification, just as she uses Mrs. Jennings' good-natured generosity and obligingness to pursue her own self-indulgence. Marianne believes that she understands the power others can exert and uses her awareness as an argument to excuse herself from properly attending to them. She considers attention to others in terms no less rigorous than that which she expects from them: total conformity to her own manners and judgment. But Elinor is not so limited and tries to explain the proper view to Marianne: "'I am guilty, I confess, of having often wished you to treat our acquaintance in general with greater attention; but when have I advised you to adopt their sentiments or conform to their judgment in serious matters?'" (SS 94). Proper manners do not require conformity but a respect for and attention to the opinions and feelings of others. Marianne's fault is not so serious as Willoughby's, but both of them ironically betray a want of real feeling. In Fanny Price one finds a situation not unlike Marianne's, though Fanny is not so culpable as Marianne. Fanny's timidity makes Tom with his acting scheme and Sir Thomas with his

marriage scheme assume that Fanny can be coerced into doing what they wish. Ironically, Fanny's giving in to the pressure from Tom to act in the play teaches her a lesson and strengthens her for the greater pressure later brought by Sir Thomas. Emma provides one with a double vision, for she misuses the manners of others - particularly those of Harriet Smith - and is herself misused by Frank Churchill, who takes advantage of her fanciful mind and lively manners.

But perhaps finally the most dangerously deceptive aspect of manners lies in their lending the appearance of truth to foolish ideas and opinions. They can give stupidity the air of sense, weakness the appearance of strength. Jane Austen often makes characters who appear to be very different have similar opinions or similar motives for behaviour in order to emphasize the deceptive powers of form. Mr. Bennet makes the proper connection between Wickham and Mr. Collins: "'[Wickham] is as fine a fellow...as ever I saw. He simpers, and smirks, and makes love to us all. I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas himself to produce a more valuable son-in-law'" (PP 330). Wickham and Collins differ only in manner. Because Collins is awkward, heavy and studied, his elaborate compliments and flattery are at once recognized as artificial and foolish; but Wickham's polish and good looks make him <u>seem</u> sensible until one catches his real meaning. His manners are then revealed as fawning and empty flattery.

Henry Crawford's manners give him a power similar to that of Wickham. Yet when we compare his proposal to Fanny with Collins' proposal to Elizabeth, the similarity between the two men is clear. Their manners are very different in form, but all derive from vanity and self-confidence. Upon Elizabeth's refusal, Collins declares: "'I am not now to learn...that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean

to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long'" (PP 107). She attempts to disabuse him of this idea, but he persists: "'...I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character'" (PP 108). Sir Thomas tells Fanny that Crawford believes he "'received as much encouragement to proceed as a well-judging young woman could permit herself to give. I was very much pleased with what I collected to have been your behaviour on the occasion; it shewed a discretion highly to be commended'" (MP 315). At their second interview Fanny tries to make her refusal more definite, but Crawford continues to refuse to believe her: "All this she had said, and with the earnestness of sincerity; yet this was not enough, for he immediately denied there being anything uncongenial in their characters, or any thing unfriendly in their situations; and positively declared, that he would still love, and still hope!" (MP 327). Both Sir Thomas and Crawford share foolish ideas with Collins, however much more sensible in general or more polished and subtle in their manners. The parallel between Sir Thomas and Collins is further reflected in the advice about marriage both men give; both are motivated by selfish aims. Collins warns Lizzy that "'you should take it into farther consideration that in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you'" (PP 108). Sir Thomas' advice to Fanny is only slightly more subtle; his meaning is the same: "'...let me tell you, Fanny, that you may live eighteen years longer in the world, without being addressed by a man of half Mr. Crawford's estate, or a tenth part of his merits'" (MP 319).

Collins is not the only character in Pride and Prejudice with whom Sir Thomas shares foolish opinions. He regrets that Fanny has such fine scruples, "for, less willing than his son to trust to the future, he could not help fearing that if such very long allowances of time and habit were necessary for her, she might not have persuaded herself into receiving his addresses properly, before the young man's inclination for paying them were over" (MP 356). Mrs. Bennet is a bit more impatient than even Sir Thomas, but they are joined by a common object: to procure marriages regardless of the lack of affection of the parties. She begs her husband to intervene with Lizzy: "'You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him, and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have her'" (PP 111). Jane Austen does not, of course, estimate all these characters as being equally worthless. Mr. Collins and Mrs. Bennet are marked by absurd manners and they have far less sense than Crawford and Sir Thomas. Because the opinions of Crawford and Sir Thomas are sometimes quite sensible, it is especially difficult, when their foolish opinions are conjoined with pleasing manners, to discern their errors.

In her earlier novels Jane Austen carefully examines manners in various forms, considers the strengths and weaknesses of the forms. But in Persuasion she quietly challenges any conception of good manners that relies on rigid form derived from a standard dictated by rank or position in society.[10] Wentworth's manners may not reflect the sort of refinements Lady Russell has a tendency to value so highly, but they are open and affectionate, like those of William Price, who is so much admired at Mansfield Park. Anne Elliot understands that Lady Russell has not simply been deceived in giving more credit to good manners than is

[10]Jane Nardin notes that Persuasion contrasts the "propriety of rules...with a spontaneous and informal propriety" p.17.

merited, but that her idea of what forms good manners take is too limited:

> [Lady Russell] must learn to feel that she had been mistaken with regard to both [Wentworth and William Elliot]; that she had been unfairly influenced by appearances in each; that because Captain Wentworth's manners had not suited her own ideas, she had been too quick in suspecting them to indicate a character of dangerous impetuosity; and that because Mr. Elliot's manners had precisely pleased her in their propriety and correctness, their general politeness and suavity, she had been too quick in receiving them as the certain result of the most correct opinions and well regulated mind. (P 249)

Jane Austen perhaps preferred, like Mr. Knightley, an open temper, but she knows how to value properly other tempers and the manners that are most suitable to those tempers. She cannot endorse the unequivocal value of a rigid code of manners, but instead approves the manners which best reflect the good feelings of the individual. Both Fanny Price and Emma Woodhouse learn the necessity of relinquishing the idea of a strict code of polished, refined forms as a means of estimating the value of the individual.

In Portsmouth Fanny is confronted with a situation bearing certain resemblance to that of the Crawfords at Mansfield. The Crawfords begin to see for the first time the proper meaning that ought to be given to forms, the moral import of manners. Fanny learns that good feelings can exist without polished manners, although manners can facilitate the proper expression of those feelings. Most of her family in Portsmouth have neither good manners nor feelings, but Fanny soon perceives that Susan's fault is not in her disposition, in a dominance of selfish ill-feeling, but in her manners. The girl has been taught neither manners nor principles from which to derive a code of manners. But she has a quick mind and a good heart; her feelings make her want to do right, to make things better in their home, but she does not know

how: "Susan was only acting on the same truths, and pursuing the same system, which her own judgment acknowledged, but which her more supine and yielding temper would have shrunk from asserting. Susan tried to be useful, where she could only have gone away and cried; and that Susan was useful she could perceive; that things, bad as they were, would have been worse but for such interposition, and that both her mother and Betsey were restrained from some excesses of very offensive indulgence and vulgarity" (MP 395-6). The difference in Susan and the Crawfords lies in her wish to understand, to improve, to exert herself. The Crawfords are unable to sustain any desire to improve, to exert themselves, because they cannot give proper value to the good feelings - her love for Edmund, his for Fanny - that open to them the existence of such possibilities. Fanny is able to overcome her diffidence, her fear of exertion, through her growing affection for Susan, which in turn teaches Susan the proper ways to exert herself.

Emma Woodhouse reacts as adversely to the appearance and manners of Robert Martin as Fanny does to Susan's manners: "'He is very plain, undoubtedly - remarkably plain: - but that is nothing compared with his entire want of gentility...I had no idea that he could be so very clownish, so totally without air. I had imagined him, I confess, a degree or two nearer gentility'" (E 32). Emma and Fanny are both inclined to judge manners according to those of a set of refined people rather than according to the good feelings the manners reflect. Their fault is like that of Lady Russell: all place more importance on polished form than on open, sensible, kind feelings. Emma understands that Mr. Knightley's manners are different from those of Mr. Weston and Mr. Elton, to whom she encourages Harriet to compare Martin. But she fails to see that the feelings and sense that are the basis of Mr. Knightley's

manners are also the basis of Martin's. Mr. Weston is good natured, but neither sensible nor discriminate, faults that make him sometimes fail to give proper attention to others' feelings. He reveals the limits beyond which open, unaffected manners can be wrong: "General benevolence, but not general friendship, made a man what he ought to be" (E 320). Mr. Elton is all polish and idle refinements without good feelings or good sense. Mr.Knightley's manners comprehend the best of those of both men - general benevolence rather than general friendship; enough refinement to give form to kindness, not idly polished form for its own sake. Good feelings are the most important quality of manners; these he shares with Robert Martin. When Emma denigrates Martin's manners, Mr. Knightley responds: "'Robert Martin's manners have sense, sincerity, and good humour to recommend them; and his mind has more true gentility than Harriet Smith could understand'" (E 65). Emma gradually begins to appreciate the value of the manners of Martin and his family. When Harriet meets them in Ford's, Emma admits to herself: "The young man's conduct, and his sister's, seemed the result of real feeling, and she could not but pity them" (E 179). The Martins' kindness towards Harriet shows more true gentility than Emma's conduct towards the girl. Emma might give Harriet's manners polish, but the polish is at the expense of feeling. Emma knows that she is wrong in the plan she forms for Harriet's returning Elizabeth Martin's call: "The style of the visit, and the shortness of it, were then felt to be decisive. Fourteen minutes to be given to those with whom she had thankfully passed six weeks not six months ago!" (E 187). Not only is the polish Emma gives Harriet's manners no merit, the refinement, in failing to comprehend proper attentions to the feelings of others, proves a positive demerit. Robert Martin and Mr. Knightley possess truly good manners - the sincere, open, unaffected expression of

benevolence and affection.

In Jane Austen's six novels we follow a progression, the evolution of her ideas about manners. She considers in her earlier novels the importance of principles and feelings to give meaning to form, the possibility that form itself can promote good feelings and principles. But gradually she comes to value more and more good feelings and principles unattached to rigid forms dictated by the refinements of society. In Persuasion good feelings are everything, give rise to everything that is valuable. She celebrates openness that makes its own forms, finds expression for its own truths. "The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of improvement" (P 40); they stand between the attachment to the artificial social forms of Sir Walter, Elizabeth Elliot, Mary Musgrove, Lady Russell and William Elliot; and the open, unaffected expression of real feeling practiced by the Crofts, the Harvilles, Wentworth and Anne Elliot. The delicate balance between a regard for form and the necessary duty of attending to the feelings of others is shown when the Miss Musgroves stop "to say, that they were going to take a long walk, and, therefore, concluded Mary could not like to go with them..." (P 83). Mary, who has no sensitivity to the feelings of others, no ability to understand her own obligations, insists upon joining them. Anne understands that the girls wish to go alone, and "admired again the sort of necessity which the family-habits seemed to produce, of every thing being to be communicated, and every thing being to be done together, however undesired and inconvenient" (P 83). Anne appreciates the proper feelings that give rise to an adherence to form, but equally understands one's own responsibility for perceiving others' feelings that ought to lead one to know when one is actually wanted. The Musgroves show open, good feelings in their

manners to Mary, but Mary does not return those manners in kind. The real credit ultimately goes to Louisa and Henrietta, who are not deterred from their plan to visit the Hayters. Even though they know Mary will not approve of Henrietta's going to mend the breach between Charles Hayter and herself, they do not allow Mary's joining them to alter their plan. Forms still have a proper place in social order, but they are the result of a proper regard for others and they create a reciprocal obligation of mutual attention to the feelings of everyone.

2: The Tendency of Form

In Mansfield Park Jane Austen broadens her interest to include the power of larger forms within which personal manners operate. The brief discussion in Pride and Prejudice of the form of courtship reveals her awareness of the latitude in these larger forms and intimates the deeper exploration to come in subsequent novels. Charlotte Lucas distrusts the generally accepted form of courtship, particularly the stricture against a young woman's showing too much encouragement: "'It may perhaps be pleasant...to be able to impose on the public in such a case; but it is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him; and it will then be but poor consolation to believe the world equally in the dark....In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better shew more affection than she feels'" (PP 21-2). Lizzy argues that Jane "'does help [Bingley] on, as much as her nature will allow'" (PP 22) As with manners, the form ought to accommodate itself to personality; the misfortune that it does not gives the latitude that allows the rather cynical view of Charlotte Lucas. She believes

in giving the form the meaning it ought naturally to have in order to achieve the end for which it is designed, in this case marriage. But seeming to participate in a form, to adopt a form without adhering to the truth the form is meant to signify, leads to deception and destroys the value of the form.[11] Jane Austen sometimes questions the form itself, but she always presents more than one view. There is some truth in what Charlotte Lucas says; there <u>are</u> drawbacks in the reticence fashion required of a woman in courtship, although Lizzy is right to maintain that to pretend more affection than one feels is wrong.

In <u>Mansfield Park</u> the value of the convention of coming out is examined in a conversation between Mary Crawford and Tom and Edmund Bertram. Mary is confused because Fanny dined at the parsonage, which indicates that she is out, but said little, which implies that she is not out. Edmund dismisses the "'outs and not outs'" (MP 49) and says that Fanny "'is grown up. She has the age and sense of a woman'" (MP 49). Mary continues the conversation, moving to a more general discussion of the form. She suggests that the fault in the system lies in too sudden an alteration of young ladies' manners; they pass from reserve to confidence. Edmund argues that the fault is not in the system, but in the girls who have no real modesty before coming out; they have only pretended to be modest. Mary objects to the failure of the form to maintain the <u>appearance</u> of modesty once the girls are

[11] Denis Donoghue, "A View of <u>Mansfield Park</u>" in <u>Critical Essays</u>, ed. B.C. Southam, notes that by truth Jane Austen "means, in human relations, a direct correlation of speech and action" p.42, but when recognizable social form is involved - in this instance courtship - speech and action must be in harmony with the meaning inherent in the form itself, the meaning the form signifies.

out, but in her scheme of values it is better to show too much confidence once one is out - that is "'certainly the modestest part of the business'" (MP 50) - than to give any indication, however innocent, of being out when one is not. Tom's anecdote about Augusta Sneyd's seeming to be out before she actually was out brings Mary's disapproval: "'Such half and half doings never prosper'" (MP 51). Her final pronouncement that "'Miss Price is not out'" (MP 51) carries her implicit disapproval of Fanny's dining at the parsonage. Form has greater value than meaning to Mary. She can see when meaning is not quite what it ought to be, but her deepest disapproval is reserved for those who violate the form itself. Edmund is wrong to dismiss the value of form. He comprehends only the moral value that ought to inform the coming out convention, but he ignores the need Fanny has for the social value, the event signifying her entrance into society, the participation in a larger circle of people than she has been used to. Fanny needs the benefit of the confidence to be gained from such experience. Jane Austen does not intrude to approve or disapprove the convention. It is an integral part of the world of Mansfield Park, the world in which circumstances have placed Fanny. Like accomplishments, the coming out convention can only confirm Fanny's feelings of inferiority, not because of its inherent, unchanging and universal value, but because of the value placed upon it in this specific world.

Catherine Morland's coming to understand the world entails the necessity of comprehending the limitations of form. She is disturbed by Captain Tilney's flirtation with Isabella Thorpe, her brother's fiancée. She concludes that he must know nothing of the engagement and decides to speak to his brother. Henry Tilney assures Catherine that his brother knows of the engagement,

has known of it nearly as long as he has known Isabella. Catherine cannot understand why the flirtation continues, why Captain Tilney perseveres and why Isabella allows it. Henry is more worldly, more aware that an engagement, though it ought to deter such behaviour, does not when those involved are insincere. He cannot consider the situation so grave as Catherine does, and tells her that no more will come of it than his brother's toasting Isabella in the mess-room for a fortnight after his leave is over, and Isabella and James will laugh over Captain Tilney's passion. Catherine's sense of danger is right, and the situation does not end as Henry has predicted - except, perhaps, for his brother's part. Catherine learns through experience not that she is wrong in her value of form, but that she can only attribute as much meaning to form as her own observations will allow.

The idea of tendency is crucial to a comprehension of Jane Austen's view of form, to the way of judging form itself rather than the meaning with which a form is invested by those who use it. From time to time Jane Austen uses the word tendency to denote the end towards which certain views, actions, traits of character, lead. Elinor Dashwood does not find Marianne's values in themselves wrong, but she perceives the possibility of wrongs proceeding from those values: "'There are inconveniences attending such feelings as Marianne's, which all the charms of enthusiasm and ignorance of the world cannot atone for. Her systems have all the unfortunate tendency of setting propriety at nought...'" (SS 56). Marianne's disregard for ordinary forms of social propriety gives way to a disregard for personal propriety, a proper concern for the feelings of other people. To care nothing for what anyone thinks of her going to Allenham with Willoughby is but a failure to value social propriety; to become so engrossed in her own emotions that she is

rude to Mrs. Jennings and careless of Elinor's pains is a deeper evil towards which the wrong of the first reveals a tendency. Jane Austen makes fun of an overscrupulous concern with tendency by having Mr. Collins officiously respond to Elizabeth's lively inquiry about his dancing at the Netherfield ball: "'I am by no means of opinion...that a ball of this kind, given by a young man of character, to respectable people, can have any evil tendency...'" (PP 87). Ironically, Lizzy's own liveliness and playfulness proves to have something of an evil tendency here, for her inquiry leads Mr. Collins to engage her for the first two dances! Edmund Bertram's absence from Mansfield is "in its cause and its tendency" (MP 285) a relief to Fanny and painful to Mary Crawford. The cause is his ordination, his entering the profession Fanny approves and Mary disapproves. The tendency of the cause and the absence is to separate him from Mary, to end the possibility of their marrying, because she disapproves of his ordination. Jane Austen sometimes sees opposite tendencies in a single form, an idea implied by Elizabeth's expecting Mr. Collins to find evil in dancing but finding it there herself. Speaking in her own voice Jane Austen raises the question of the tendency of her own work at the end of Northanger Abbey:

> To begin perfect happiness at the respective ages of twenty-six and eighteen, is to do pretty well; and professing myself moreover convinced, that the General's unjust interference, so far from being really injurious to their felicity, was perhaps rather conducive to it, by improving their knowledge of each other, and adding strength to their attachment, I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern, whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience (NA 252)

Her point, of course, is that works of art should take no such dogmatic positions, but rather show how such positions finally harmonize and provide in their synthesis a greater truth than either could alone convey.

Any form that has an inherent tendency to encourage either self-deception or the deception of others Jane Austen considers wrong.[12] She finds a perfect metaphor, a perfect form, for disclosing this general view in the theatricals in Mansfield Park. Amateur theatricals have a natural tendency towards deception; illusion is the very essence of theatricals. Jane Austen examines the wrong that grows out of the attempt to impose more truth on theatricals than the form will bear. Her visionis complex, often ambiguous; a close look at her use of the form reveals truths essential to her conception of the power of a form itself to shape human conduct.

The most obvious fault in the theatricals is the meaning the characters give to the form.[13] They use the form to express personal feelings and to deceive one another as to their real feelings. But the complex import of the episode includes the form, not only functioning as a vehicle manipulated by the characters and as a metaphor manipulated by Jane Austen, but as a form having a tendency of its own. Recent criticism, such as that of Stuart M. Tave, has centred upon the specificity of the scheme at Mansfield. This view allows, in effect, a dissociation of the form - the theatricals - from the meaning - the moral import, the deception. Professor Tave concludes: "It is not that Sir Thomas is opposed to theatricals of any sort, any more than Edmund is

[12] Deception and self-deception are closely connected with acting and role-playing, which are discussed in some detail by Tony Tanner.

[13] As I have already noted, the meaning - speech and action - must be in harmony with the form. The absence of such harmony leads Donoghue to conclude: "Above all, the theatricals are an offence against Truth", p.44.

(or Jane Austen). The question is one of these people in these circumstances. There is a whole series of objections...but there is no sign that the most general...are universal rules."[14] I am not entirely certain of Tave's exact meaning here. If he means theatricals to include professional performances, then he is correct, as Jane Austen herself makes clear; but if his meaning is limited to private performances (as his whole discussion seems to indicate) then the question is not so easily answered. The wrong of the Mansfield theatricals does spring in part from the specific circumstances, but there are indications of a more general view.[15] One cannot ignore Sir Thomas' objections to the theatricals upon his return, and it is clear that he would have objected had he been present at the start of the scheme. His return changes radically the circumstances of the party, removes some of the principal objections one can make on the grounds of circumstances. The amateur theatricals, with or without the presence of Sir Thomas, have an inherent tendency to cause more pain than pleasure. Jane Austen shows how this tendency joins with existing tendencies towards wrong among the party at Mansfield to form a situation that is dangerous, though not irremediably evil.

Time lends enormous power to form. The longer a situation with a tendency towards wrong continues, the more strength the tendency gains, the more compounded becomes the wrong. The tendency of the Sotherton visit is towards wrong, but the tendency is contained by brevity. To argue that the wrong of the theatricals is apparent in its ultimate outcome - the adultery of Maria and

[14]Tave, p.185.

[15]The more general reasons for disapproving the theatricals are usually taken to be questions of decorum. For discussions of the impropriety of the theatricals see Stuart M. Tave and David Lodge.

Crawford - is to ignore the necessity for judging the visiting of estates wrong for the same reason. At Sotherton the flirtation between Maria and Crawford is firmly established; Rushworth is jealous; Julia is excluded; Fanny is neglected. Precisely the same pattern is repeated in the theatricals episode. Jane Austen creates these parellels to forestall a condemnation of the theatricals based solely on their ultimate outcome; visiting estates is evidently not inherently evil. Sotherton presents opportunities that cannot proceed due to the brevity of the visit; but the theatricals present time as well as opportunities for tendencies towards wrong to take root and to develop. The destructive tendencies that emerge at Sotherton, that are shown in broad outline there, should have made the day a valuable experience - such as Emma's at Box Hill, or Catherine's in Mrs. Tilney's bedroom, or Wentworth's at Lyme Regis - but the experience is ignored by all except Fanny Price. Maria, Julia and Rushworth should have learned to beware of the dangers of Henry Crawford. Instead they all readily agree to the theatricals, which allow a great deal of latitude for behaving however one pleases, involves noise, confusion and deception, and is conducive to dissention and disagreement. Theatricals are easily made to embody every tendency towards wrong in the young people and do not immediately offer an opposing tendency towards encouraging them to behave rightly. The evils apparent in the Sotherton visit are embodied in a form that permits existing weaknesses and dangers greater power and momentum in the longer time span of the rehearsals for the play.

Although Yates "'brought the infection from Ecclesford'" (MP 184), the disease signified by the scheme has its origins at Mansfield itself. Sir Thomas has by his sternness and gravity alienated his children, especially his daughters, from his

affection.[16] Maria and Julia are happy that he has to go to Antigua, look forward to the new taste of freedom, the relief "from all restraint" (MP 32). Among its several attractions they recognize in the acting scheme a pleasure which has never been specifically forbidden by their father, but one which he would certainly disapprove. Sir Thomas, by leading them to think him an enemy to their pleasure and desirous of restricting their freedom, has unwittingly encouraged them to seek out what he would dislike, and to give free-rein to the vanity and selfishness his aloofness has enabled Mrs. Norris to cultivate in Maria and Julia. The tendency of Maria and Julia to approve any activity that will allow them to exercise both their vanity and their freedom leads them to seize upon the theatricals with no thought, no exercise of judgment - only a desire to indulge themselves.

Jane Austen no doubt took the proper kind of pleasure in novel amusements - balls, concerts, professional (perhaps even amateur) theatricals - but she evidently disapproved of attempts to make such pleasures the basis of one's happiness. She places greatest importance upon "all those little matters on which the daily happiness of private life depends..." (E 117). But Mr.Yates expresses a very different idea, one which is closer to the view of most of the Mansfield party than that of Emma and Mrs. Weston. The dissolution of the Ecclesford party is a grave disappointment to him: "To be so near happiness, so near fame, so near the long/in paragraph praise of the private theatricals at Ecclesford, the seat of the Right Hon. Lord Ravenshaw, in Cornwall, which would of course have immortalized the whole party for at least a twelvemonth! " (MP 121)

[16] D.D.Devlin, "Mansfield Park", Ariel E, 2 (Oct.1971), remarks the danger of Sir Thomas' behaviour: "Sir Thomas restrains others, but he restrains not only all displays of bad behaviour but all free exchange between himself and his children - that free exchange which is shown to be the source of all moral growth", p.36.

Theatricals have the same place in the imaginations of most of the young people at Mansfield - and evidently most of the party at Ecclesford - as a visit to Brighton has in that of Lydia Bennet: "every possibility of earthly happiness" (PP 232). Elizabeth warns her father of the dangers of allowing Lydia to put herself in such a situation, expose herself to the temptations of "a situation of such double danger as a watering-place and a camp" (PP 237). The parallels with the theatricals are farther inforced by Elizabeth's fears that Mrs. Forster is not a proper companion for Lydia, will not protect her as she should. Elizabeth's own scheme for novel amusement contrasts with both Lydia's visit and the theatricals. She is to travel to the Lake District in the company of her aunt and uncle, sensible people and intimate relations who have the deepest concern for her happiness and her right conduct. Unlike Lydia and the Mansfield party, Lizzy does not expect either enduring happiness or even perfect delight from the trip: "But it is fortunate...that I have something to wish for. Were the whole arrangement complete, my disappointment would be certain. But here, by carrying with me one ceaseless source of regret in my sister's absence, I may reasonably hope to have all my expectations of pleasure realized. A scheme of which every part promises delight, can never be successful; and general disappointment is only warded off by the defence of some little peculiar vexation'" (PP 237-8). Every part of the theatricals is expected to give delight, and the failure of the scheme to do so gives rise to the annoyances that give the first hint of the tendency of the scheme itself to cause more displeasure than pleasure.

A party of selfish young people pursuing trivial desires for self-gratification hardly arouses moral indignation, but it does evoke laughter. General and petty discontent sets in almost immediately. The party is divided between those who prefer comedy

and those who prefer tragedy. Fanny Price "looked on and listened, not unamused to observe the selfishness which, more or less disguised, seemed to govern them all..." (MP 131). Once the play is chosen and Edmund agrees to act, the group seems to settle to the pleasures of their scheme, but Fanny finds "before many days were past, that it was not all uninterrupted enjoyment to the party themselves.... Every body began to have their vexation" (MP 164). Edmund is disturbed because his opinion still carries no weight. Tom, once the frenetic activities of moving the billiard-table, unlocking doors, and ordering carpentry and scene-painting are over, "began to be impatient to be acting; and every day thus unemployed, was tending to increase his sense of the insignificance of all his parts together, and make him more ready to regret that some other play had not been chosen" (MP 164). Everyone has a complaint. The general atmosphere of the theatricals is one of dissatisfaction: "So far from being all satisfied and all enjoying, [Fanny] found every body requiring something they had not, and giving occasion of discontent to the others... (MP 165). Jane Austen implies that this confusion and dissatisfaction is not due simply to the personalities of the Mansfield party, but is a general characteristic of amateur theatricals. Yates' complaints and his account of those of the others at Ecclesford unconsciously makes this point:

> 'A trifling part,' said he, 'and not at all to my taste, and such a one as I certainly would not accept again; but I was determined to make no difficulties. Lord Ravenshaw and the duke had appropriated the only two characters worth playing before I reached Ecclesford; and though Lord Ravenshaw offered to resign his to me, it was impossible to take it, you know. I was sorry for <u>him</u> that he should have so mistaken his powers, for he was no more equal to the Baron! A little man, with a weak voice, always hoarse after the first ten minutes! It must have injured the piece materially; but <u>I</u> was resolved to make no difficulties. Sir Henry thought the duke not equal to

> Frederick, but that was because Sir Henry wanted the part himself; whereas it was certainly in the best hands of the two.' (MP 122)

We understand more about the real tendency of private theatricals from this speech than from all his protestations of the great pleasure of the party. The happiness is theoretical, more wishful thinking than reality.

But the deepest evil of the theatricals lies in the tendency to cause breaches in familial ties, to cause in the exalted prospect of personal pleasure a disregard for the most basic familial affections and duties. Yates' account of the end of the Ecclesford scheme gives the first indication of this tendency. The Ecclesford theatricals were abandoned because of the death of Lord Ravenshaw's grandmother. Yates' selfish desire to act, coupled with his probable disrespect for familial ties, leads him to observe:

> 'It is not worth complaining about, but to be sure the poor old dowager could not have died at a worse time; and it is impossible to help wishing, that the news could have been suppressed for just the three days we wanted. It was but three days; and being only a grand-mother, and all happening two hundred miles off, I think there would have been no great harm, and it <u>was</u> suggested, I know; but Lord Ravenshaw, who I suppose is one of the most correct men in England, would not hear of it.' (MP 122)

He feels that distance - two hundred miles - lessens the duty of the party to give up their scheme because of respect owed the host's feelings. (One can imagine Yates' reaction to news of Sir Thomas' death at sea - a danger Edmund is acutely aware of - thousands of miles removed from Mansfield. The increased distance would certainly have compensated for the vexation of the closer relationship!) However comical Yates' insensitivity may be, Jane Austen is making a serious point, as becomes clear as the theatricals at Mansfield unfold.

Edmund tells Fanny that no matter what comes of the plan they must remember: "Family squabbling is the greatest evil of all, and

we had better do any thing than be altogether by the ears" (MP 128). But the theatricals cause just such disagreement. Maria and Julia are separated by their personal interests in the scheme. Both invest the theatricals with the power to captivate Henry Crawford; they see - or think they see - the possibility of enduring happiness (marriage to Crawford) in a scheme of ephemeral pleasure, a possibility that ought never to be reckoned on. When Crawford shows his preference for Maria, and Julia withdraws from the theatricals, a positive breach in the sisters' affection for one another results:

> The sister with whom [Julia] was used to be on easy terms, was now become her greatest enemy; they were alienated from each other, and Julia was not superior to the hope of some distressing end to the attentions which were still carrying on there, some punishment to Maria for conduct so shameful towards herself, as well as towards Mr. Rushworth. With no material fault of temper, or difference of opinion, to prevent their being very good friends while their interests were the same, the sisters, under such a trial as this, had not affection or principle enough to make them merciful or just, to give them honour or compassion. (MP 162-3)

Neither Julia nor Maria values familial affection over self-gratification, and neither comprehends the justness of their jealousy of each other. Maria enjoys her triumph over Julia, and Julia cultivates her bitterness by hoping that Maria's conduct will be punished. Both ultimately suffer the effects of their selfish conduct, their insistence upon their own pleasures without regard for principles, family ties or the feelings of others. The ends that embody their suffering proceed from tendencies perhaps not born with the theatricals, but distinctly given form by and nourished by the acting scheme. Maria and Julia should have benefited from the experience - but neither wholly understands her own fault in the affair.

Excitement and confusion blind most of the party to what is

actually happening; consequently they have no sense of the reality of the dangerous tendencies of the scheme. Julia's anger should have roused Edmund, Mrs. Norris and Tom, should have alerted them to the dangers. But all are too involved in their own interests in the production to notice the extent of Julia's suffering, to realize it must have a deeper cause than the annoyance of not getting the part she wanted in the play. The chaos of the theatricals detracts attentions from the feelings of others. Tom lives on the surface of things; he thinks of nothing but the theatre, and since Julia is unconnected with it, he pays her no attention.[17] Mrs. Norris also deals only with superficial activities. She is too busy managing things, making little economies "to have leisure for watching the behaviour, or guarding the happiness of [Sir Thomas'] daughters" (MP 163). Edmund's blindness arises from more complex causes, but it is nonetheless connected with his personal concerns, his desire for immediate self-gratification. His confusion, like that of most of the participants, grows out of a series of antithetical frames of mind: "his theatrical and his real part....Miss Crawford's claims and his own conduct...love and consistency" (MP 163). The theatricals as a form tend to blind one to the evil that the scheme embodies.

The theatricals have a momentum of their own, a momentum generated by the sheer excitement inherent in the form as well as by the desires of the young people. Even Fanny and Edmund, who begin by disapproving the scheme, become more directly involved the longer the theatricals go on. The episode is in one sense

[17] Tom is not designedly wicked. His fault is not unlike that which Lizzy Bennet sees in Bingley: "'I am far from attributing any part of Mr. Bingley's conduct to design...but there may be error, and there may be misery. Thoughtlessness, want of attention to other people's feelings, and want of resolution, will do the business.'" (PP 136)

complete when Fanny agrees to act, for whatever Edmund tells his father, Fanny is then unequivocally a part of the scheme, an acting, rather than simply active, member of the party.[18] She is saved from possible deeper involvement by the return of Sir Thomas. But we must keep in mind that his fortuitous return saves not just Fanny but the whole party. The participants in the scheme are required to determine their further course of action. The play is at an end, but the continuation of its tendencies - the breaches, the disregard for feelings, obligations and duties can continue. Sir Thomas' return opens the possibility for the opposite tendency in the theatricals: the chance for the people to understand what their real motives were, the wrong of those motives, and to change their erroneous ways of thinking and feeling. But only Fanny feels deeply the significance of her own compromise, only she understands that although strictly speaking the theatricals are a time of folly rather than vice, the scheme tends towards deeper wrongs that are finally manifested in the adultery of Maria and Crawford.

18 Although Jane Austen is ambiguous as to whether or not Fanny actually acted, we are surely meant to see her agreeing to act as a compromise of her principles. Fanny does not yet have the experience and the strength to enable her to sustain her judgment. For an opposing view, see Joseph Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form: An Assay of Jane Austen's Art (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967), pp.86-108.

3: The Ambiguity of Language

The engagement is a social form with a purpose the inverse of the theatricals. Engagements are meant to disclose the existence of real feeling; theatricals, to give the illusion of real feelings. Maria and Crawford create confusion between form and meaning by openly acknowledging the form but equivocating upon the meaning. Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill do not acknowledge their engagement but adhere to its meaning. Maria cultivates under the guise of the theatricals feelings she ought to overcome if her engagement is to have any significance, feelings that finally destroy the marriage proceeding from that engagement. Crawford is more culpable because he feels nothing akin to real love for Maria; the possibility of redeeming his wrong conduct through genuine affection exists in his relationship with Fanny, not Maria. Frank and Jane threaten the happiness of others by pretending to be unattached, but in the end, as with Maria and Crawford, the real threat is to themselves.

Frank Churchill expects his lively manners towards Emma to deceive others without attaching her, to give the appearance of the form of courtship without any danger of conveying meaning to Emma herself. Henry Crawford relies on form not only to deceive, but to protect him from too much involvement, from becoming entangled. During the theatricals, the play enables him to maintain the illusion of distance; no one can accuse him of showing too much particularity to Maria, of expressing too warm feeling: he is only playing his role, as he openly acknowledges. Maria's engagement provides another form for Crawford to use for his own protection. He tells Mrs. Grant: "'An engaged woman is always more agreeable than a disengaged.... Her cares are over, and she feels she may exert all her powers of pleasing without

suspicion. All is safe with a lady engaged; no harm can be done'" (MP 45). When he again makes Maria his object, he undoubtedly feels even safer: she is not just engaged but married. But he discovers that Maria's passionate feelings have more power over her conduct than social forms or moral principles.

The inherent danger of amateur theatricals resides in the difficulty of maintaining a distinction between one's role and real life. But among the group at Mansfield several favour the acting scheme for precisely this reason. No deception is involved in the real feelings that Edmund and Mary bring to their roles - Fanny sees that their performance has much "nature and feeling in it" (MP 170). Maria's performance is convincing for the same reason. But Crawford, who is considered the best actor among them - indeed, the only real, hardened actor - makes Maria believe that his role expresses his true feelings. Ironically, only he adheres to the form. The others give <u>real</u> meaning to a form that is meant only to give the <u>illusion</u> of reality, of nature. The irony ultimately turns against Crawford. In London Maria will not allow him to withdraw; he is forced by the momentum, the tendency of his own action, to take the public as well as private role of her lover.

Jane Austen often associates insincere or unfeeling manners with a performance, with acting a part. Mr.Collins is always, in a sense, on stage, playing out the part he imagines for himself. After his rejection by Lizzy the insincerity of his manners is proved by his change in manners towards her: "As for the gentleman himself, <u>his</u> feelings were chiefly expressed, not by embarrassment or dejection, or by trying to avoid her, but by stiffness of manner and resentful silence" (PP 115). His words have had no real meaning, expressed no real feelings; his are as empty as the words of Henry Crawford before he falls in love with Fanny.

Maria perceives the meaninglessness of Crawford's language when he comes to Mansfield to announce his departure for Bath: "To her he soon turned, repeating much of what he had already said, with only a softened air and stronger expressions of regret. But what availed his expressions or his air?... She had not long to endure what arose from listening to language, which his actions contradicted..." (MP 193). Crawford tries to compensate for his insincerity of meaning by the appearance of sincerity of manner. But words ultimately carry more meaning than manner does, just as action carries more meaning than words do. When Crawford wishes his words to convey genuine feeling, he discovers that he has rendered his language impotent. Fanny believes neither his words nor his sister's: "There was every thing in the world against their being serious, but his words and manner" (MP 305). Only his actions, his delicacy towards her family in Portsmouth and his attentions to his tenants at Everingham, begin to restore to his words the capacity for conveying truth.

Jane Austen abhorred the abuse of language, and her novels celebrate the value of the best chosen language - simple, direct and unaffected.[19] Marianne Dashwood condemns the use of hackneyed phrases, but we see that while Willoughby might provide her with all the freshness of phrase and manner she desires, in his final meeting with Elinor he is dependent upon clichés to express genuine feelings:

> Every line, every word [of Marianne's letter] was - in the hackneyed metaphor which their dear writer, were she here, would forbid - a

[19] Donald D.Stone, "Sense and Semantics in Jane Austen", NCF, 25 (1970) notes: "The abuse of language can be psychologically, as well as socially, dangerous. Philosophers and anthropologists have made it increasingly clear that language, rather than reflecting reality, can create is own reality: what we see becomes defined for us by our manner of seeing, by the kind of language we draw upon to make our definitions", p.31.

> dagger to my heart. To know that Marianne was in town was - in the same language - a thunderbolt. - Thunderbolts and daggers! - what a reproof would she have given me! - her taste, her opinions - I believe they are better known to me than my own, - and I am sure they are dearer. (SS 325)

Ironically, real feeling has made so little part of Willoughby's experience that he has never been in the habit of finding language to express his real sentiments. His talent has been for the lively, warm implication rather than for the clear, open expression of truth.[20] The language of Lovers' Vows indicates the impropriety of its being performed at Mansfield. Fanny Price notes that although Tom has argued that he "can conceive no greater harm or danger to any of us in conversing in the elegant written language of some respectable author than in chattering in words of our own'" (MP 126), the parts of Agatha and Amelia are " totally improper for home representation - the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty... " (MP 137). But Maria and Mary readily agree to use this situation and this language to express personal feelings. Language is an important part of the corruption of truth during the theatricals. But just as theatricals as a form must be at the core of any discussion of deception and pretence in Jane Austen's novels, language in Emma must be at the heart of any examination of her ideas about words.

Jane Austen's linguistic chauvanism provides one of the clearest distinctions between affected and unaffected language in Emma.[21] Mrs. Elton's referring to her husband as her caro sposo

[20]For a more detailed discussion see Babb, pp.67-9.

[21]Cf. Ward Hellstrom, "Francophobia in Emma", SEL, 5 (1965), which shows how French words and words of French origin are applied to Frank Churchill.

establishes her affectation, an Italianate sort of refinement which Jane Austen - and Emma - ridicule. Mrs. Elton uses the foreign phrase probably because she considers it elegant, a sign of her knowledge of a foreign tongue, the accomplishment of a refined, well-educated woman. But the affectation is of a piece with her other linguistic presumptions of familiarity - her calling Mr. Knightley, "Knightley", and Jane Fairfax, "Jane". Her affected intimacy and ease are meant to convey refinement, to signify her being on terms of familiarity with those in the best circles, ranks, spheres, but in fact reveal just the opposite.

Mr. Knightley contrasts with Mrs. Elton in his total lack of affectation, in his common-sensical, precise use of English. He understands French, but reveals that knowledge only to emphasize the superiority of English: "'No, Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very 'aimable', have very good manners, and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him'" (E 149). The emphasis on English words is made explicit by the narrator at Box Hill. Frank Churchill's behaviour "in [Emma's] own estimation, meant nothing, though in the judgment of most people looking on it must have had such an appearance as no English word but flirtation could very well describe" (E 368). Mr. Knightley is nearly silenced by an English word from Emma when he is about to propose, but he depends upon the fullest, the best meaning, the good generous feelings comprehended by the word <u>friend</u>: "'As a friend!' - repeated Mr. Knightley. - 'Emma, that I fear is a word - No, I have no wish - Stay, yes, why should I hesitate?... Emma, I accept your offer - Extraordinary as it may seem, I accept it, and refer myself

to you as a friend'" (E 429-30). Their love is based on those open, good feelings expressed by the best English; even in the exhilaration of love Mr. Knightley speaks "in plain, unaffected, gentleman-like English, such as Mr. Knightley used even to the woman he was in love with..." (E 448).

The difference in the language of Mrs. Elton and Mr.Knightley is not simply that of social refinement or propriety. Mr. Knightley's language conveys good feeling, his kindness, generosity and truthfulness. Her language is all self-serving, self-enhancing, and even when she claims to be attentive to others, her words are empty. She forgets to send her carriage to bring Jane Fairfaxand Miss Bates to the ball, but then regales in the credit for her attention after she has been reminded of her negligence: "'What a pleasure it is to send one's carriage for a friend! - I understand you were so kind as to offer, but another time it will be quite unnecessary. You may be very sure I shall always take care of them'" (E 321). Mr. Elton does not have the degree of affectation that marks his wife's speech, though Emma early in the novel notes a fault in his speech: "...with all his good and agreeable qualities, there was a sort of parade in his speeches which was very apt to incline her to laugh" (E 82). The parade in his speeches connects him with Miss Bates, from whom one word signals the beginning of a long line of trivialities. As ridiculous as Miss Bates is, as similar as her ramblings might be in form to those of both the Eltons, nothing in her language betrays self-aggrandizement or an ungenerous, unfeeling thought. The good and the ridiculous are, as Emma says, unfortunately blended in her; the callous, the proud and the ridiculous are blended in the Eltons.

From time to time real language, real meaning emerges. One

of the ironies of Mrs. Elton's affectation of the foreign phrase is that she has not mastered her native tongue: "'Neither Mr. Suckling nor me had ever any patience with them...'" (E 321). Her moment of deepest confusion comes in a long conversation with Mr. Weston, who resists, quite unconsciously, all her attempts to turn every subject to herself.[22] She fishes for a compliment when she says her sister travels with her own sheets - and that she has "caught a little of [Selina's] nicety" (E 306). Rather than complimenting her nicety, Mr. Weston assures her that Mrs. Churchill does "every thing that any other fine lady ever did" (E 306). Mrs. Elton, over-anxious to keep the conversation on the subject of her own circle, interposes: "Selina is no fine lady, I assure you. Do not run away with such an idea" (E 306). She realizes at once that she has lost control of the conversation, that she is saying things that may indeed be true, but that she did not mean to reveal. She speaks only for the pleasure of hearing her own voice and for securing compliments to herself.

Jane Fairfax's language is genuinely refined and elegant, but she is forced by her secret engagement into an affectation of coldness and reserve, the opposite extreme of Mrs. Elton's ease and vulgarity. Emma rightly judges that Jane's "'extreme and perpetual cautiousness of word and manner, such a dread of giving a distinct idea about any body, is apt to suggest suspicions of there being something to conceal'" (E 203). The concealment intensifies Jane's natural reserve and minimizes her true elegance. Once her secret is known, she admits her fault to Emma: "'I know what my manners were to you. - So cold and artificial! - I had always a part to act. - It was a life of

[22]Cf. Barbara Hardy's analysis of the "manoeuvres of two egoists, jostling for the floor", p.120 ff.

deceit! - I know that I must have disgusted you'" (E 459).[23] Manners here certainly comprehend language. But Jane's true warmth, her good and tender feelings, show forth, as in her conversation with John Knightley about the value of letters, and with Emma at Donwell about her fatigue, her wish to be alone. These glimpses of Jane Fairfax, devoid of the affectation of the part she is acting, are the basis of our sympathy for her. Emma's great lapse, not in revealing her true self but rather a deep imperfection in herself, occurs at Box Hill when she is rude to Miss Bates: "Miss Bates, deceived by the mock ceremony of her manner, did not immediately catch her meaning..." (E 371). Ceremony might control one's expression, as it had for so long kept Emma's impatience with Miss Bates in check, and it might for a moment even deceive one as to the true meaning of words, but when the meaning is apprehended, all affectation of form ceases to have power.

Jane Austen uses letter-writing to emphasize the necessity of separating words from personal manners. Frank Churchill's reputation in Highbury prior to his visit rests almost completely on opinions of the letter he writes to Mrs. Weston.[24] However highly regarded the letter may be by everyone else, Mr. Knightley sees that its purpose is to justify Frank's dereliction of duty to his father and Mrs. Weston: "'He can sit down and write a fine flourishing letter, full of professions

[23] In retrospect, Jane might find the whole business disgusting, but she had her share of pleasure in Frank's double-meanings. See especially her "smile of secret delight" (E 243), when Frank says only "true affection" (242) could have prompted the gift of the piano.

[24] See U.C. Knoepflmacher, "The Importance of Being Frank: Character and Letter-Writing in Emma", SEL, 7 (1967).

and falsehoods, and persuade himself that he has hit upon the very best method in the world of preserving peace at home and preventing his father's having any right to complain. His letters disgust me'" (E 148-9). Frank uses fine language as a substitute for doing his duty, but he is not quite so culpable as Mr. Knightley believes. He is at Weymouth, as we learn from Mr. Woodhouse, who can remember little about Frank's letter other than that it was written from Weymouth and dated September 28th. He is remiss in fulfilling his duty, because he is in love, just as Mr. Knightley himself later fails to keep an appointment with Mr. Elton because his mind is so much occupied with his engagement to Emma. Frank's manners, once he comes to Highbury, confirm rather than contradict the sincerity of feeling Emma attributes to his first letter, but the real proof of his good feeling comes in his letter to Mrs. Weston after he leaves Highbury: "It was a long, well-written letter, giving the particulars of his journey and his feelings, expressing all the affection, gratitude, and respect which was natural and honourable.... No suspicious flourishes now of apology or concern; it was the language of real feeling towards Mrs. Weston..." (E 265). Ironically, however artificial Frank's language appeared in his first letter, in person his manners give his language the ring of truth to such a degree that even Mr. Knightley believes him attached to Emma.[25] The lively,

[25]Throughout this discussion of language in Emma, I am indebted, through both my agreement and disagreement, to Graham Hough, "Narrative and Dialogue in Jane Austen", Crit Q, 12 (1970). Mr. Knightley is not, as we see here, "always right" p.222, though he is certainly the character who comes closest to the ideal of perfect expression and perfect comprehension of words.

affectionate expressions that redeem him with Mrs. Weston signify the fault in his relationship with Emma.

Because Emma is predisposed to like Frank Churchill, she refuses to judge his first letter truthfully. His polished manners later confirm her in her wrong judgment. In contrast, she is disposed to find no merit in Robert Martin. Before she ever sees him she decides the Martins "must be coarse and unpolished" (E 23), and when she meets him her opinion seems confirmed by his awkward manners and appearance. She is determined to adhere to this judgment even when confronted with contradictory evidence. She comprehends that his letter to Harriet reveals something not in accord with her previous opinion: "She read, and was surprized. The style of the letter was much above her expectation. There were not merely no grammatical errors, but as a composition it would not have disgraced a gentleman; the language, though plain, was strong and unaffected, and the sentiments it conveyed very much to the credit of the writer. It was short, but expressed good sense, warm attachment, liberality, propriety, even delicacy of feeling" (E 50-1). Emma's apprehension of the value of language is limited by her placing too much worth on polished and refined manners. Here the themes of language and manners merge. Emma sees clearly the artificiality of both Mrs. Elton's manners and language, but she cannot value properly the good of either Martin's manners or language. Just as she must become reconciled to the blend of the good and the ridiculous in Miss Bates, she must also become reconciled to the blend of the good and the unpolished in Robert Martin.

The motif of word games in <u>Emma</u> unites Jane Austen's most playful, light and sparkling style with her most serious

purpose.[26] Word games make their appearance in Mr. Elton's charade. The first episode of the novel is a sort of charade itself, a riddle that Emma is expected to solve. The motif is contained in the game of anagrams at Hartfield instigated by Frank Churchill. His purpose is to convey through the letters a message to Jane about his own jumbling of another kind of letters: he has confused the information in Jane's letters with that in Mrs. Weston's! The play on letters and words reaches its climax at Box Hill with Mr. Weston's conundrum on Emma's name, a trick that relates implicitly to the title of the novel. The M A of the game, of Frank's game, is not the Emma of perfection at all - as Mr. Knightley, himself playing upon the word perfection, points out. M A is the Emma limited by frivilous wit. She is not the Emma whose best possibilities we depend upon to be realized, but the Emma, static, restricted and only appearing to be perfect, with whom Weston, Frank, Mr. Woodhouse, and most of the rest of Highbury are satisfied. She is perfect in the letter, but not in the spirit.

The use made of games and letters (in the sense of both alphabet and epistles) signifies the childishness of most of the group. Mr. Woodhouse, who is no more than an extraordinarily well-behaved child, is associated with games; he must be continually entertained by backgammon and whist.[27] Only when Mr. Knightley visits can games be put aside. He usually does

[26]Cf. Alistair M. Duckworth, "'Spillikins, Paper Ships, Riddles, Conundrums, and Cards': Games in Jane Austen's Life and Fiction", in Jane Austen: Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[27]Cf. Duckworth, p.292-3.

not play games; he observes - a pursuit more suitable for grown-ups. Emma has picked up more of the childishness of her father than she realizes, which is reflected in the ease with which she enthusiastically enters into the amusement of Mr. Elton's charade and Frank's various games. All these games seem more elevated than Mr. Woodhouse's, because they require wit, quick intelligence, but in truth they abuse the qualities they appear to utilize. When Emma speaks foolishly Mr.Knightley comments: "'Nonsensical girl!'" (E 214), and Emma herself calls Frank Churchill "the child of good fortune" (E 443). Emma and Frank do not yet merit being called woman and man. Games are suitable for children, sometimes harmless for adults, but Frank and Emma have reduced the stuff of their lives to games, games that involve human happiness and feelings, and thereby open their games to destructive possibilities. Mr. Knightley notes this explicitly when he reads Frank's letter of justification: "'Playing a most dangerous game. Too much indebted to the event for his acquittal'" (E 445). Language, like manners and other social forms, lends itself to games, to delightful and amusing games, but when these games interfere with its proper function , its highest purpose, the embodiment of truth, it becomes dangerous.

The games by which Emma is duped involve both language and manners. Mr. Elton believes that his manners will enable Emma to understand the charade. But when she considers it all in retrospect, "it was all confusion. She had taken up the idea, she supposed, and made every thing bend to it. His manners, however, must have been unmarked, wavering, dubious, or she could not have been so misled" (E 134). She sees correctly that although her fancy led her wrong, Elton's manners, and the

charade uniting with those manners, did little to set her right: "To be sure, the charade, with its 'ready wit' - but then, the 'soft eyes' - in fact it suited neither; it was a jumble without taste or truth. Who could have seen through such thick-headed nonsense?" (E 134). Elton has expected pretty words, however inaccurate, to carry the weight of affectionate feelings. Despite the most accurate description at Box Hill, however, words seem to lose all power for Emma; she fails to realize that Frank is referring to her, paying her a rather unsubtle compliment, when he tells her that she must choose him a wife who "must be very lively, and have hazel eyes" (E 373).[28] The jumble is now wholly in Emma's mind. With Mr. Elton Emma deepened the confusion, not by mistaking his object - courtship - but by mistaking who his object was. Some confusion is well-nigh an unavoidable condition of life. Even Mr. Knightley's attentions to Harriet appear, have the possibility of being, quite different from what he really intends. But he does not go riding off to London to have pictures framed or write charades for anyone. There is no reason to suppose he has any object at all, that there is any riddle to be solved.

Frank Churchill's game is a riddle, but his object is to prevent the solution rather than promote it, as Elton wished. Frank works against the solution by creating a diversionary drama into which Emma is willingly drawn. The creation of a drama requires the manipulation of language, which Frank succeeds in accomplishing for a while. When Mr. Knightley tells Emma that

[28]Jane Austen has carefully prepared for the reader's making the proper connection, even if Emma does not, by having Mrs. Weston rhapsodize over Emma's "'true hazel eye'" (E 39).

he suspects more intimacy between Frank and Jane than they admit, she happily speaks for Frank, deriving her lines from those he has used to her: "...they are as far from any attachment or admiration for one another, as any two being in the world can be. That is, I presume it to be so on her side, and I can answer for its being so on his. I will answer for the gentleman's indifference'" (E 351). Behind this assertion lies Frank's confidence in the power of words, in the power of his own words to counter any suspicions his little attentions to Jane might arouse.

At Box Hill Frank's manipulation of Emma is most explicit and connects him with Mrs. Elton, who speaks for Jane Fairfax to the extent of procuring her a position as governess, even though Jane tells her: "'I make no inquiry myself, and should be sorry to have any made by my friends'" (E 300). Emma has answered as Frank meant her to for his indifference to Jane, but at Box Hill he quite literally speaks for her. He does not give an opinion that she has herself expressed; he attributes words to her that are his own. He announces: "'Ladies and gentlemen, I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse...to say, that she desires to know what you are all thinking of'" (E 369); then he revises the demand: "'Ladies and gentlemen - I am ordered by Miss Woodhouse to say, that she waives her right of knowing exactly what you may all be thinking of, and only requires something very entertaining from each of you, in a general way'" (E 370). Frank, not Emma, is giving the orders, dictating the game, and Emma herself conforms to his demands with her witticism made at the expense of Miss Bates' feelings. Her wit is the worst abuse of language: a sacrifice of feelings to words.

The experience at Box Hill has two effects on Emma's attitude towards language. She becomes determined to make her

language express not simply her feelings but genuine good feeling. She calls on Miss Bates and makes a "very friendly inquiry after Miss Fairfax" (E 378), which establishes good feelings between Miss Bates and herself. She later writes Jane a note "in the most feeling language she could command" (E 390) offering her the use of their carriage. Jane's response reveals another aspect of Emma's attitude towards language, the language of others: "Emma felt that her own note had deserved something better; but it was impossible to quarrel with words, whose tremulous inequality showed indisposition so plainly..." (E 390). Emma does not properly weigh the meaning of the words - Jane's unequivocal rejection of any favour from Emma - but trusts only that part of their meaning conveyed by the most literal form, Jane's handwriting. She soon discovers that whatever the import of Jane's handwriting, the words themselves have real meaning, meaning made distinct by Jane's actions: she is not too ill to accept favours; she is too angry to accept favours from Emma. Emma now distrusts words altogether, as she makes explicit in her exchange with Mr. Weston:

> 'Mr. Weston do not trifle with me....I charge you by all that is sacred, not to attempt concealment.'
> 'Upon my word, Emma.' -
> 'Your word! - why not your honour! - why not say upon your honour...?' (E 393)

Emma's acceptance of Mr. Knightley's proposal indicates a movement towards a proper reconciliation of words and meaning, of words and honour. Jane Austen does not give Emma's words, because words are too ambiguous; they are finally not important in the letter, but in the spirit, the

feelings.[29] There is nothing doubtful in the spirit, the feelings behind Emma's language: "She was his own Emma, by hand and word..." (E 433). No longer is she the M A of Box Hill whose perfection exists only in the letter.

The discrepancy between the perfection of the spirit and the imperfection of words is marked in Emma's not telling Mr. Knightley the whole truth regarding Harriet Smith: "Seldom, very seldom, does complete truth belong to any human disclosure; seldom can it happen that something is not a little disguised, or a little mistaken; but where, as in this case, though the conduct is mistaken, the feelings are not, it may not be very material" (E 431). Words are ambiguous, capable of encompassing the little disguises and mistakes of human disclosures, while redeeming those faults by conveying the good feelings that should always give rise to words. One form does not always convey the same truth, as we saw in the comparison of Miss Bates and the Eltons, and the same truth can be conveyed by more than one form, as Mr. Knightley implies in telling Emma of Robert Martin's engagement to Harriet. Emma's distrust of words, conjoined with what she believes is the truth about Harriet's affection for Mr. Knightley, makes her doubt that the engagement is a reality. Mr. Knightley assures her "'that there was no obscurity, nothing doubtful, in the words [Martin] used'" (E 474)

[29]This is the point it seems to me that Hough fails to take into full account. The language of the "objective narrative" might be a social or even moral norm, but feelings are finally superior to words, take precedence over norms conveyed by words. Jane Austen marks more clearly than Hough gives credit the ambiguity of language. She could agree, I think, with his own assessment of language but not perhaps with his estimation of her understanding of the deceptiveness of language: "And style of speech is not an unambiguous indicator of character and value. It is an indicator, of course, but a far more deceptive and uncertain one than novels like Emma would suggest", p.222.

to tell him of the engagement. Martin has told him the central truth; for details and particulars that compose the contingencies of this truth, Emma must wait: "'Your friend Harriet will make a much longer history when you see her. - She will give you all the minute particulars, which only woman's language can make interesting. - In our communications we deal only in the great. - However, I must say that Robert Martin's heart seemed for him, and to me, very overflowing'" (E 472). Genuine feeling is the element, the spirit, common to the truth of the words of both Harriet and Robert Martin. Emma has made the feelings and words of them both a part of her game, but Mr. Knightley's juster values and deeper understanding have succeeded in undoing the bad effects of Emma's artifice, and have enabled him, through his own more sensible artifice, to reopen the possibilities of nature, of their affection for one another. Emma and Harriet emerge from the world of games into the world of nature, of growth and change, in which they become women.[30]

The misuse of language has its own wrong tendency, a tendency which works against the good tendency of the engagement, and which parallels the wrong tendency of the theatricals. The tendency towards the destruction of affection and family ties finally turns against Maria and Henry, divides them from each other, disabuses them of any fancied affection they had for one another, and cuts them off from the pleasures of living in the circle of people they have learned to value most. In their carelessly deceiving others, they ultimately deceive themselves and thereby cause themselves perhaps deeper pain

[30]Lest one think Jane Austen reveals anti-feminist - or at least deprecatory ideas about women - here, we should note that Frank Churchill is led into adulthood by a sensible woman, Jane Fairfax.

than they cause anyone else. Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax also suffer most of all, although they cause themselves far less irremediable pain than Maria and Crawford cause themselves. They have placed themselves in danger of deeper and more abiding pain than they actually suffer, but their affection for one another is genuine, not simply a wish for ephemeral self-gratification.

Words become an instrument of retribution in Emma. The post, which has been an essential part of the secret pleasure of Jane and Frank, leads to the first sign of real discord between them. After he has passed her blunder in the game of anagrams, he passes Dixon for Emma's amusement. Jane's annoyance makes her reject his final word, which according to tradition was pardon. The deception is beginning to turn back upon them. They are duped by their own devices, the retribution complete, when Frank fails to post the letter that will assure Jane of his continuing affection and hope of marrying her: "'Imagine the shock; imagine how, till I had actually detected my own blunder, I raved at the blunders of the post'" (E 443). He has first placed the fault upon the post, when in fact the fault lay with himself, his own carelessness, which had played a great part already in making their engagement painful to them both. Although a form of communication, such as the post, may be used to facilitate reprehensible modes of behaviour, it can never in itself justify that behaviour. Using these forms to promote deception, to serve as a part of a game, leaves one open to all the possibilities of self-deception, and consequent pain. Herein lies the danger of placing too much dependence upon forms - upon manners, upon language, upon even the post!

The pain and confusion of Frank and Jane could not have been

all the result of a postal error, real or imagined. As he becomes impatient with not being able to show his affection openly, as she grows more uncertain of their ever being able to marry, the words and manners of each, which have been the means of deceiving others, begin to deceive each other. Frank doubts Jane's affection because she is so reserved, so prudent - she will not allow him to accompany her on her walk from Donwell to Highbury: "'I met her walking home by herself, and wanted to walk with her, but she would not suffer it. She absolutely refused to allow me, which I then thought most unreasonable'" (E 440-41). His annoyance leads to his behaviour at Box Hill, provides his justification for his intensified attentions to Emma. Jane suffers because of all she sees and hears of his attentions to Emma; he suffers the breach he understands from her words to him: "'I doubted her affection. I doubted it more the next day on Box-Hill; when, provoked by such conduct on my side, such shameful, insolent neglect of her, and such apparent devotion to Miss W., as it would have been impossible for any woman of sense to endure, she spoke her resentment in a form of words perfectly intelligible to me'" (E 441). Retribution comes to Emma herself in a similar form. She, who has led Harriet Smith to fancy herself in love with Mr. Elton and has interpreted Mr. Elton's words and actions for Harriet, becomes dependent upon Harriet's interpretation of Mr. Knightley's words and actions. She suffers from the same sort of misinterpretations as Jane and Frank. The pain of Emma, Frank and Jane is finally alleviated by open, unaffected words conveying genuine good will and good feelings: this is the first, the most important function of our comical, rich, ambiguous but 'best chosen language'.

Chapter III: Social Institutions

1: Individuality and Social Institutions

John Bayley has suggested that Lionel Trilling's interpretation of Mansfield Park is limited, because "Professor Trilling assumes that to Jane Austen the idea of morality was complex and intriguing in itself, but it was people whom she found complex and intriguing - morality was simple enough."[1] Jane Austen was not only confident that she knew what was right and what wrong, she assumed the reader shared her knowledge.[2] She does not set up arguments to prove that Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford, Lydia and Wickham, Willoughby, William Elliot or Mrs. Norris are wrong, are immoral. Her interest lies in the complex machinations, the foggy illusions, the lack of sound values that lead to immorality. Balancing this, she explores the equally complex field of actions, the clarity of vision and the sound values that sustain the moral probity of other characters. Professor Bayley, in the same book, maintains that one "cannot emphasize too much that for Jane Austen a loving absorption in dividual personalities always precedes the working out of patterns of discernment.... She does not begin with insights into the nature of society."[3] This seems to me a plausible theory of Jane Austen's method, but the superiority of the later novels to Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility lies not only in an increase in technical skill or a deepening of insight into individual personalities. Beginning

1. John Bayley, The Characters of Love (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p.216

2 Hough notes: "It is obvious that such fiction as [Jane Austen's] could only be written when there was an accepted law of social and moral behaviour to which allegiance was generally paid", p.222.

3 Bayley, The Characters of Love, p.215.

with Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen's interest in character is conjoined with a full understanding of the importance of social institutions to individuals. From the union of these two aspects of her vision emerges Jane Austen's deepest insights into the nature of society, into the relationship between society and the individual.[4]

We find intimations of these insights in Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility; they emerge more clearly in Pride and Prejudice; and in Mansfield Park Jane Austen provides a name for the function of social institutions that is her focal point: "... the barriers, which society gives to virtue" (MP 468). In the earlier novels, particularly, she considers the possibility of manners as a barrier to virtue, but finds a rigid code of manners, a strict set of social forms, practically, if not theoretically, deficient as a support to good conduct. With her increasing awareness of the dangers of such a code of manners, came a greater sense of the dependence one must place upon social institutions as barriers to virtue, as means of helping one sustain a course of right conduct. The modern reader is likely to consider social institutions as an impersonal aggregate, a relentlessly, heedlessly grinding machine, but Jane Austen saw them as existing in order to promote and support the virtue of the individuals who compose society. A society was only as good as its individuals, and the purpose of its institutions was to improve and encourage the virtuous action of each individual.

[4]Professor Hardy notes: "She offers no far-reaching generalizations about class, wealth, or manners, and her dramatized spokeswomen and spokesmen make few overt attempts to criticize society. Commentary is subordinated to drama and chronicle, but it is neither invisible nor absent. Her sharp and profound insight into social structures, relationships and roles creates a series of critical scenes. Generalization emerges, quietly but accumulating power", p.103.

Jane Austen does not subjugate the individual to the society, but sees that in the ordinary course of things most individuals achieve greatest fulfilment and freedom as an integral part of society.[5] Just as we find no extreme examples of vice in Jane Austen's novels, we find no individuals who achieve the splendid isolation of a mystic, a saint. Her characters, like most people, are meant to be a part of a social aggregate, and for such people isolation is not splendid, is not a movement upward, but is terrible, a movement downward to the least felicitous existence possible.[6] Jane Austen views man not as he is seen by so many modern novelists - free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave - but as a creature dependent upon the external world, rather than upon his own naked will, to enable him to sustain himself morally.[7] The external world of course offers, in Jane Austen's view, the temptation to bring into reality the most selfish impulses of the individual, but she insists that social

[5]See Richard Simpson, No.44, in Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, ed. B.C. Southam (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968): "She sees [man], not as a solitary being complete in himself, but only as completed in society. Again, she contemplates virtues, not as fixed qualities, or as definable qualities, but as continual struggles and conquests, as progressive states of mind, advancing by repulsing their contraries, or losing ground by being overcome", pp.249-50.

[6]Barbara Hardy marks the connection between social and emotional fulfilment in Jane Austen's novels: "Although it is true that her strongest passions are usually solitary and private, inner and hidden, the conclusions and culminations of the novels make it plain that emotional solitude is an undesirable and painful deprivation", p.43.

[7]Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), notes that although Fanny Price appears totally dependent she achieves an independence undreamt of by most of the other characters: "...to the Bertrams and Crawfords alike Fanny is the only dependant at Mansfield - they have not insight to perceive any but material need; how should they realise that she, having reached through painfully acquired self-knowledge independence beyond their imaginings, often understands their feelings more clearly than they do themselves?" pp. 165-6.

institutions serve to check those impulses and to give form to good conduct by creating duties and obligations, and by encouraging affection. This is not to say that Jane Austen thought society could or ought to force virtue upon the individual. Her novels are not didactic in the sense of arguing what is moral and immoral, but in the sense of suggesting the potential power inherent in social institutions for the individual to use, of his own volition, to support a desire to be virtuous. She maintains that the individual bears responsibility for his conduct; social institutions simply offer support to facilitate the fulfilling of that responsibility.

The use of the word "barriers" might seem infelicitous, signifying as it does imprisonment as well as protection. But Jane Austen is aware of the paradoxical nature of barriers, a paradox she examines through certain images in Mansfield Park. The iron palisades and the ha-ha at Sotherton are emblems both of protection (Fanny's view) and imprisonment (Maria's view). The barriers should have signified to Maria the limits beyond which she would place herself in danger of moral collapse and the loss of her freedom. After her marriage to Rushworth, her conjugal duty should serve the same purpose as the palisades and the ha-ha, but she allows the abstract barriers to restrict her action no more than she allowed the physical barriers. By ignoring these barriers, Maria gains not more and more freedom, but less and less. She first seeks to escape the restrictions of Mansfield by marrying Rushworth, but she discovers that whatever her apparent increase of freedom, the boundaries imposed by her marriage leave her still dissatisfied. Her escape from Rushworth does not yield the freedom she has designed - any more than the marriage to Rushworth did - but instead the physical, social confinement of a solitary life with only Mrs. Norris for a companion. Maria's

being literally cut off from society is not only a real state physically, but a reflection of the selfishness that has always cut her off from any genuine connection with the world external to her own ego.

Maria has pursued a false idea of freedom. Jane Austen conceives of freedom not in terms of the latitude one allows oneself in acting according to selfish impulses, but in terms of how many possibilities one can see in a situation for action that does not violate one's moral probity. Portsmouth has physical barriers that remind us of those at Sotherton. As Fanny and William arrive they "passed the Drawbridge, and entered the town..." (MP 376), and the barriers are again noted as Fanny leaves: "How her heart swelled with joy and gratitude, as she passed the barriers of Portsmouth..." (MP 445). When William leaves Portsmouth, Fanny feels restricted, as imprisoned as Maria has felt at Mansfield and in her marriage. But Fanny attempts to release herself from the bondage of her own dissatisfactions, not by running away from her situation, but by confronting it, and working to accept and improve the situation itself. She rejects, though not without difficulty, the release from Portsmouth offered by marriage to Crawford or more immediately by his offer to take her back to Mansfield. Fanny looks for duties to attend to in Portsmouth, and her exertion to bring a little order to the house leads to her attachment to Susan, to the affection that strengthens and animates those duties first dictated by principles.

Fanny's life in Portsmouth is by no means an image of the most felicitous sort of freedom. But Jane Austen shows how Fanny's duties lead to attachment to Susan, and how both occupation and affection diminish Fanny's misery and dissatisfaction, her sense of uselessness and isolation. Her enduring her situation in Portsmouth keeps open the possibilities for something more than

the peace of mind arising from the performance of one's duty, for a situation in which one's personal desires harmonize with one's duty. Fanny's marriage to Edmund, her establishment in the security of a home that is truly her own, brings about this harmony. But Jane Austen devotes much of the novel to examining how familial affection, friendship and profession have contributed significantly to Fanny's achieving this harmony. We comprehend the possibilities of a marriage not by the fact that it is a marriage, but by the values revealed in the actions preceding the marriage, particularly those that indicate the quality of familial affection, friendship and profession of those who marry.

The theme of marriage becomes intricately bound up with Jane Austen's ideas about other social institutions. She chose to work within the fashionable form of the novel of marriage, but we can trace an important aspect of her development as a novelist through her use of that form. She began by exploring human nature within the limits of the convention, but she expanded and enriched the convention through an increasing awareness of the importance of family, friendship and profession to making a good marriage. Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility are more concerned with personality than with any concept of society, and the merits and demerits of its institutions. The institutions are there but function as little more than background, as recognizable forms to give verisimilitude to the fiction. Conduct is almost wholly dictated by personal sense, principles and feelings. The idea that the individual will requires support from external forms exists in embryonic form, but has yet to be fully worked out and incorporated into the dramatic action of the novel. Marianne Dashwood is so fascinated by her own judgment and feelings that she fails to give more than perfunctory attention to either the

sense or the sensibility of her sister.[8] As she recovers from her illness she tells Elinor: "'Your example was before me: but to what avail? - Was I more considerate of you and your comfort? Did I imitate your forbearance, or lessen your restraints, by taking any part in those offices of general complaisance or particular gratitude which you had hitherto been left to discharge alone? - No; - not less when I knew you to be unhappy, than when I had believed you at ease, did I turn away from every exertion of duty or friendship; scarcely allowing sorrow to exist but with me, regretting only that heart which had deserted and wronged me, and leaving you, for whom I professed an unbounded affection, to be miserable for my sake'" (SS 346). Marianne admits having cut herself off from the external world, from the benefits of family and friendship. But the realization, though preparing Marianne for a marriage to Colonel Brandon, is tangential to the action which brings about the marriage.

Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility conform to a convention - that of having novels end with the marriage of the hero and the heroine - but in neither novel is the convention expanded or enriched. The marriages of Henry and Catherine, of Elinor and Edward, of Marianne and Colonel Brandon, satisfy only the most basic demand of the convention. Little sense of wider personal good and almost no sense of a wider social good are conveyed.[9] Catherine and Marianne undergo certain personal improvements, but there is little sense that these changes either make their

[8] For a detailed discussion of the misuse of sense and sensibility in the novel, see C.Gillie, "Sense and Sensibility: An Assessment", EIC, 9 (1969).

[9] Cf. Barbara Hardy: "These two socially hopeful endings may reflect no more than Jane Austen's own experience of an actively congenial family life. But the sense of social renewal and expansion grows unmistakably as her fiction matures', p.133.

marriages possible or are made possible by their marriages. The marriages are little more than perfunctory rewards for their virtues. At best one imagines that their lives will be as pleasant after marriage as they were before. In Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion the marriages of the heroes and heroines signify the transition from inherited values to perceived values. The transitions are all distinctly changes for the better. The marriages are a proper end of a complex working out of thematic problems according to the personalities of the characters, not just a gratifying conclusion to satisfy a convention or to impose a didactic purpose of Jane Austen's own making. The heroes and heroines have confronted the deficiencies of inherited values and their own past personal values and embrace a new system of values arising in part from the fullest apprehension of the possibilities of mature love. The improvements in the characters' values are reflected in the improvements in their situations, which promise an increase in both personal and social good.

The transition from the sphere of inherited values to that of perceived personal values is never accomplished without conflict and complication in Jane Austen's novels. Inherited values in the form of parental influence, such as Mrs. Ferrars' over Edward, Mr. Woodhouse's over Emma, or Lady Russell's over Anne Elliot, often conflict with perceived values, especially when the latter include a sense of duty and respect for one's parents. But even more subtly, inherited values that are unsound create difficulties in one's perceiving the deficiency of the values, as we see with Marianne, Darcy and the Crawfords. Parental values, either as they are imposed by selfish, inflexible parents, or as they are absorbed by children and taken as their own values, or

even as they are perceived by others (for example, Darcy's tendency to associate Elizabeth with the values of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, or Wentworth's to assume Anne shares those of Lady Russell, Sir Walter and Elizabeth), cloud one's perception of the best conjugal possibilities. The deficiencies of both parental and personal values must be confronted and justly estimated.

Although it is clear at the end of Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility that Catherine and Henry Tilney have dissociated themselves from the values of General Tilney, and that Edward and Elinor Ferrars maintain a relationship with Mrs. Ferrars that is no more than a matter of form, Jane Austen gives this aspect of marriage only perfunctory consideration. Pride and Prejudice reflects the first deepening of her consciousness of marriage as a transition, as a change, for the better. Elizabeth and Darcy move out of the spheres of their inherited values into a new world that is the synthesis of the best in their separate worlds, the best in their separate personalities. Lizzy puts the frivolity of Longbourne behind her, Darcy the snobbery of Rosings behind him. Lizzy is dissociated from part of her family by the marriage, and Darcy is by the same act dissociated from Lady Catherine. It is important to remember that Elizabeth's dissociating herself as much as possible from her mother results not from a false sense of self-importance derived from her acquired rank and wealth, but from her having entered a world in which her merits are justly valued, a world into which her father and the Gardiners can follow her and are happily received by her.

Jane Austen returns most explicitly to the idea of marriage as a means of real dissociation in Persuasion, but she turns upside down the conventional idea of rising in rank and wealth through marriage. The conventional idea of the importance of rank belongs to Sir Walter, expressed in his attitude towards

Mary's marriage: "Mary had merely connected herself with an old country family of respectability and large fortune, and had therefore given all the honour, and received none..." (P 6). Anne Elliot's marriage to Wentworth has not even that much, in Sir Walter's scheme of values, to recommend it. She moves away from her titled family to marry the self-made Captain Wentworth, but the narrator notes explicitly that he gives most in the marriage, though his bounty includes neither high rank nor great wealth:

> Anne... had no other alloy to the happiness of her prospects than what arose from the consciousness of having no relations to bestow on him which a man of sense could value. There she felt her own inferiority keenly. The disproportion in their fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment's regret; but to have no family to receive and estimate him properly; nothing of respectability, of harmony, of good-will to offer in return for all the worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be sensible of, under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity (P 251).

The meritorious heroine is no longer rewarded with the trappings of wealth and estate, as Elizabeth Bennet is, and is not disturbed by any material inequality. The things of value one brings to a marriage - besides one's own merits - consist of sensible friends and relatives. The aristocracy is not revitalized; it is left to its own devices and that which is good in it is allied with the vitality of the rising middle-class whose material merits derive from personal exertion and whose personal merits derive from a lack of an inflated sense of self-importance.

Between Pride and Prejudice and Persuasion Jane Austen explores a somewhat different possibility in marriage - a less distinct separation from family (signified by a maintaining of geographical closeness), a revitalization of the family itself. The marriage of Fanny and Edmund does not, as has been claimed,

signify Fanny's becoming mistress of Mansfield Park.[10] They take their proper place not in the worldly grandeur of the great house at Mansfield, but in the comfort and security of Mansfield parsonage. Their residence at the parsonage, after the ineffectual occupancies of the Norrises and the Grants, marks the regeneration of moral values at Mansfield itself, and the decline of secular values that have previously held the position of highest worth there. The corrupting influence is purged with the departure of Mrs. Norris and the Crawfords, and the sound values Sir Thomas has always theoretically advocated are reanimated and given reality by the marriage of Fanny and Edmund and by their settling at Mansfield.

The incorporation of marriage into family, rather than dissociation from family through marriage, appears even more literally in Emma. Mr. Knightley and Emma live at Hartfield after their marriage, thus enabling Emma to combine her respect for and duty to her father with the personal benefits to herself of a good marriage. The change at Hartfield is not from secular to religious values, but from immaturity to maturity, from childhood to adulthood. Emma does not so much reject the values of her father as elevate them from a childish, often gently selfish level, to that of a mature, unselfish expression of sound values. She expands her own comprehension and judgment from the narrow confines of her duties as Miss Woodhouse to the wider range of duties as Mrs. Knightley, duties that encompass the greater responsibilities of the wife of an estate owner and magistrate. Hartfield as the abode of Emma and Mr. Knightley is no longer a place of games and child's play, but of the activity and pleasure of maturity.

[10] Trilling says that "the terrified little stranger in Mansfield Park grows up to be virtually its mistress" p.212. This opinion is echoed by Tanner's assertion that "we last see [Fanny] effectively accepted as the mistress of Mansfield Park", p.137, and by Duckworth's that Fanny fulfils "her fictional career in a social role as effective mistress of the Mansfield estate", p.72.

Jane Austen emphasizes again and again in the novels the necessity that one consult one's own heart, one's own conscience to determine whether a match will be genuinely good. Althbugh this places the first responsibility upon the individual, parents do have a duty to their children regarding marriage. Mrs.Bennet's ridiculous insistence that her daughters marry anyone who asks them provides an extreme example of the grossest lack of a proper sense of parental duty. Her husband counteracts the influence she tries to exert to make Lizzy marry Collins by telling his daughter that if she does marry Collins, he will never speak to her again. His influence here is only a comic exercise: he knows that Lizzy would never accept such a fool. But when Lizzy tells him of her decision to accept Darcy, Mr. Bennet for once takes his duty as a father seriously. He warns Lizzy of the dangers of marrying a person she does not respect: "'I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable, unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage.... My child, let me not have the grief of seeing you unable to respect your partner in life. You know not what you are about'" (PP 376). This is the proper exercise of parental duty. Mr. Bennet does not urge or suggest a marriage to his daughter, however great the material advantages, but warns her when he believes she has not considered demerits that outweigh any material benefits. Mr. Bennet knows both the personal unhappiness that can result from a marriage to someone one does not respect, and the dangers the marriage presents to the children of the union. His own disgust with Mrs. Bennet has placed their daughters too much under the influence of her foolishness.

In Mansfield Park Jane Austen deals with the question of

parental duty regarding marriage in a manner more likely to arrest our attention. We are not disturbed by Mrs. Bennet's threats (because we never believe Lizzy might marry Collins), or impressed by the value of Mr. Bennet's advice (because we know Elizabeth does esteem Darcy). But Sir Thomas' failure to do his duty to Maria and to Fanny gives the reader a deep sense of the importance of parental advice. Sir Thomas observes enough to know that Maria does not love Rushworth, that she is indifferent to him, her behaviour to him "careless and cold" (MP 200). He knows that he has a duty to warn her against marrying a man she does not love, to prevent if possible her ruining her prospects for happiness through such an alliance. Sir Thomas fulfils his duty in the letter by giving Maria a perfunctory word of caution, but he is too easily satisfied by her assurances, which are so much at variance with what he has seen and judged for himself. He does not even ask her to defer the marriage for a time to test the reliability of her feelings. Sir Thomas is too pleased by the material advantages of the match "to urge the matter quite so far as his judgment might have dictated to others. It was an alliance which he could not have relinquished without pain..." (MP 201). But Sir Thomas is far more culpable, his behaviour far more reprehensible when his materialistic motives lead him to urge Fanny to marry Henry Crawford. Fenny tells him the truth, that she does not love Crawford, but he will not accept this as a sufficient reason for rejecting the suitor. Sir Thomas is not guilty of trying to force Fanny to marry a man of reprehensible character - he does not know Crawford's real character - but he goes beyond the bounds of his rights and duties, beyond the bounds of good sense, by trying to influence her to marry anyone at all. Jane Austen shows that parents have not only a right, but a duty, to warn

their children against the dangers of a marriage without love or respect, but she reveals on the other hand that parents have neither a right nor a duty to urge any match whatsoever against the wishes of the child.

Jane Austen makes a fine distinction between parents who use the duty owed them as safeguards to protect their children, and those who use it as a source of power to impose their own wills on their children. She upholds the value of fulfilling one's duty to one's parents, but by no means advocates blind obedience to parental dictates. Frank Churchill uses his duty - or what he claims to be his duty - to his guardians to excuse himself from his duty to his father and Mrs. Weston. Mr. Knightley sees that Frank is wrong to allow himself to compromise his personal integrity in obedience to his aunt and uncle: "'As [Frank] became rational, he ought to have roused himself and shaken off all that was unworthy in their authority'" (E 148). Inherited values, the authority imposed by parents, are not infallible; one cannot evade one's own moral responsibility by using parental authority as a justification for one's action. Again, Mr. Knightley puts the truth succinctly: "'There is one thing, Emma, which a man can always do, if he chuses, and that is, his duty; not by manoeuvring and finessing, but by vigour and resolution'" (E 146). Although parental authority is often regarded, both by parents and children, as the highest duty, Jane Austen insists that both the exercise of and the obedience to that authority must be considered in the light of sound judgment and the dictates of one's own conscience. The refusal of either parents or children to face the possibility of parental fallibility is a denial of the truth and a failure to accept one's deepest responsibilities.

Anne Elliot's resolution to marry Wentworth if given another chance exemplifies the kind of decision Mr. Knightley advocates.

She has come to trust the validity of her own perceptions and feelings; she has not only thrown off all that is unworthy in the authority of her father and Lady Russell, she has emerged from the prudence, the hesitance to judge for herself, of youth, into a mature comprehension of the value of her own judgment, soundness of her own feelings and personal fulfilment through romantic love. Jane Austen admits that Anne's determination to follow her own judgment against the dictates of her father and Lady Russell may not conform to conventional morality, but hints that one does not always receive the best guidance by referring to conventional morality: "When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever so little likely to be necessary to each other's ultimate comfort. This may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth..." (P 248). Jane Austen often supports the dictates of conventional morality, but if one assumes her own perceptions and values are never at variance with this standard, he misses the expansiveness, the insistence upon extending the boundaries of moral possibility, that characterizes Jane Austen's vision.

To comprehend justly the character of one's parents and guardians, and to recognize the superiority of one's own judgment to theirs, are not license for disrespect and ingratitude, however little deserving of either respect or gratitude they might be. Jane Austen touches on this briefly in Sense and Sensibility, implicitly contrasting Lady Middleton's attitude towards her mother and sister, with Elinor's towards Mrs. Dashwood and Marianne. Lady Middleton evidently feels herself superior in both sense and rank to her mother and sister. Her sense of duty to them extends no further than a somewhat impatient acknowledgment that they are her mother and

sister. She dissociates and detaches herself from them by her disdainful tolerance of them. Elinor sees the faults in her mother and Marianne but she does not cultivate her sense of superiority, is never condescendingly tolerant. She cultivates her affection for them and bases her respect on the worthy parts of their characters, just as she learns to respect Mrs. Jennings for her kindness and good nature. Elinor tries to guide them, as we see in her attempts to make her mother consider realistically the limitations of their reduced income, and to discourage excessively self-indulgent emotions in Marianne. But she is not patronizing, and she brings to their concerns a genuine solicitude for their well-being.

Jane Austen provides a similar but more detailed and complex contrast in Mansfield Park. Both Mary Crawford and Fanny Price owe a certain duty to their guardians, whose faults both young women see clearly. Fanny's comprehension extends beyond seeing justly the weaknesses of Sir Thomas and her parents; she understands that whatever the faults of the former he has given her a home and an education which create an obligation and a cause for gratitude on her part; she may have no cause for gratitude to her parents, but she shows respect and forbearance simply because they are her parents. Mary, in contrast, ignores the generosity of Dr. Grant, as well as the generosity of the Admiral to her brother, if not to herself. She fails to realize the real value of seeing their faults - a protection against depending too much on their authority and influence over her own actions - and she reveals a fault in her own character by publicly criticizing them, as Edmund notes: "'I do not censure her opinions; but there certainly is impropriety in making them public'" (MP 63). However much sympathy we have for Mary in her denigration of the Admiral,

he has in previous years given her a home and has been generous to her brother. Dr. Grant now gives Mary a home, a kindness that does not undo his being prone to selfishness and peevishness of temper, but does make her obliged to him. Mary disregards the obligation and the gratitude she owes the Admiral and Dr. Grant, allowing their demerits to create a demerit in herself. Frank Churchill bears some resemblance to Mary - they share a liveliness and carelessness of word and action - but he is superior to her in his attitude towards his guardians: "...he spoke of his uncle with warm regard, was fond of talking of him - said he would be the best man in the world if he were left to himself; and though there was no being attached to the aunt, he acknowledged her kindness with gratitude, and seemed to mean always to speak of her with respect" (E 205-6). Silence or limiting oneself to remarks on the merits of people to whom one is obliged or grateful enables one to sustain one's own proper sense of respect and gratitude without compromising one's understanding of the truth and of the dangers to one's own probity the truth might present.

Jane Austen considers an adherence to duty and respect, to authority, more than merely an empty, valueless exercise of self-submission. In Mansfield Park, which contains Jane Austen's fullest consideration of both the value and the dangers of authority, we see how a sense of duty and respect for authority can be useful in a situation where one's own desires are in conflict. Fanny's sense of obligation to the Bertram children leads her to compromise her duty to Sir Thomas by agreeing to act in the theatricals. But Fanny later proves that she learned from that mistake. Ironically, she adheres to her own sense of right, to her own principles, in contradiction of Sir Thomas' wishes and in spite of her duty to him, Although Fanny shows herself

prepared to stand by her own judgment, she does not throw off all sense of duty to and respect for Sir Thomas. Her discrimination stands her in good stead at a crucial moment near the end of the novel. Fanny must decide whether or not to accept the Crawfords' offer to take her back to Mansfield, an offer made earlier but repeated after Crawford has become Maria's lover. Fanny wants to leave Portsmouth, wants to return to Mansfield, but she does not want to bring Mary and Edmund together again. The conflict of her two personal but opposing desires is resolved by the consideration of her duty to Sir Thomas: "Happily, however, she was not left to weigh and decide between opposite inclinations and doubtful notions of right; there was no occasion to determine, whether she ought to keep Edmund and Mary asunder or not. She had a rule to apply to, which settled every thing. Her awe of her uncle, and her dread of taking a liberty with him, made it instantly plain to her, what she had to do" (MP 436). She adheres to her duty to her uncle without knowing that by doing so she has protected herself from the possibility of a marriage to her cousin's lover and has kept open for herself the possibility of the fulfilment of her love for Edmund. Fanny maintains the delicate and difficult balance between her personal desires and her integrity, a harmony that can so easily degenerate into foolish and useless self-sacrifice or into blind assertion of the right to gratify one's own selfish impulses.

2: Friendship and Fraternal Affection

Jane Austen places great value on the <u>possibilities</u> of kinship, though not on the <u>fact</u> of kinship. Her novels testify to a greater dependence upon fraternal ties than upon the difficult and complex relationships between parents and children. She attaches no

mystical significance to familial ties, sees no automatic bond between members of the same family. Connections that exist beyond the fact of birth must be cultivated, must result from an habitual attention to the needs of one's family. For Jane Austen it is within the family that one's character is formed, and one's failures as brother, sister, aunt, uncle, mother, father, son and daughter are found in one's conduct towards people outside one's family circle. Despite all that she has seen at Mansfield Park to prove the contrary, Fanny Price believes in a native, inherent affection between members of one's immediate family. Her family at Portsmouth, except for William, has shown little interest in her since she left them, but when she knows she is going to visit them after an eight year absence, she imagines that she will at last be received with openness and affection, and will take a proper place within her own family. In Portsmouth she soon discovers that she is little more than a stranger to her family; they have their own needs, their own problems. Her mother's affections are already filled. Mrs. Price has only a minimal need to satisfy maternal instincts, and when these are soon satisfied, she is ready to see Fanny return to Mansfield. Fanny's father sees her only as a young woman in need of a husband. The small children hardly think of her at all. No natural solicitude, no natural friendship or love, exist between Fanny and her family. Only through her own exertion does she create a real bond between herself and Susan, a bond that might better be called friendship than kinship.

The insignificance of kinship without principles or affection is sharply etched in the relationships of the three Ward sisters: Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Price. None has principles or affection enough to make her exert herself solely because of concern for her sisters' welfare. Mrs.Norris

separates the sisters by writing an angry and threatening letter to Mrs. Price, who has just made an imprudent match; the equally angry response to this letter "comprehended each sister in its bitterness, and bestowed such very disrespectful reflections on the pride of Sir Thomas, as Mrs. Norris could not possibly keep to herself..." (MP 4). Lady Bertram, whose affection for her sister Price is easy and nonchalant, gives her up without a second thought. When Tom Bertram becomes ill, Fanny is sorry that her mother takes so little interest in Lady Bertram's son, but the narrator notes that neither sister has much interest in the other:

> So long divided, and so differently situated, the ties of blood were little more than nothing. An attachment, originally as tranquil as their tempers, was now become a mere name. Mrs. Price did quite as much for Lady Bertram, as Lady Bertram would have done for Mrs. Price. Three or four Prices might have been swept away, any or all, except Fanny and William, and Lady Bertram would have thought little about it; or perhaps might have caught from Mrs. Norris' lips the cant of its being a very happy thing, and a great blessing to their poor dear sister Price to have them so well provided for. (MP 428).

Mrs. Norris pretends to be solicitous of both her sisters and their children, but in fact she only seeks places to exercise her own power, has no comprehension of the real benefits or destructiveness of her actions. Her exertions contribute significantly to the ruin of Maria, but ironically the aunt's callousness towards Fanny seems finally to have protected the girl from her evil influence. The only bond the Miss Wards ever had was their name, but the name does not carry with it the qualities that bind together members of a family and make them valuable to one another. The Elliot sisters provide an interesting variation of the idea Jane Austen considers through the Ward sisters. Mary and Elizabeth have little more sense of their kinship than Lady Bertram and Mrs. Price, but rather than a third sister who turns

the indifference of the other two to conflict, as Mrs. Norris does, Anne Elliot exerts enough beneficial influence to maintain some semblance of good-will among them. Her good nature, her selflessness, fills the void caused by the indifference of Mary and Elizabeth.

The Musgrove sisters contrast with both the Miss Wards and the Miss Elliots. Anne "envied them nothing but that seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known so little herself with either of her sisters" (P 41). With the arrival of Captain Wentworth the real good-will between Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove is put to a test comparable to that which Maria and Julia Bertram fail so miserably when Henry Crawford comes to Mansfield: Maria and Julia rapidly become enemies; but the Miss Musgroves are not only able to maintain "the continued appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves" (P 71), they soon reach an understanding that ends whatever threat their admiration for Wentworth posed to their affection for each other. They make impossible the kind of trifling in which Crawford at first indulges. Both Maria and Henrietta are already attached, or claim to be. Maria allows neither her engagement nor her affection for Julia to make her discourage Crawford's attentions; she allows them first despite her engagement and her sister's feelings, and later despite her marriage and her knowledge that Crawford has proposed to Fanny. We are not told specifically what passes between Louisa and Henrietta, but Henrietta evidently recalls her own genuine affection for Charles Hayter and the consequent claim Louisa has to Wentworth's attentions. What becomes the first sign of the impending moral failure of Maria and Julia is made insignificant by the affection

and good-will of Henrietta and Louisa. The qualities that enable the sisters to come to an agreement, a good understanding about Wentworth, are those which have always been a real part of their relationship, not simply an appearance that existed because they had never before disagreed.

The quality that elevates ties of blood from a mere name to a valuable relationship, Jane Austen often calls friendship. Her use of friendship to designate a mutual solicitude and affection, both between members of a family, as when she describes William Price as Fanny's "constant companion and friend" (MP 15), and in the more common usage, between people who are not bound by blood kinship, gives an indication of the importance Jane Austen attached to such a relationship. After Mary Crawford talks a bit about her friendship with Mrs. Fraser and Lady Stornaway, Fanny Price is silent, "meditating on the different sorts of friendship in the world" (MP 360). Jane Austen makes a point in Mansfield Park of distinguishing between real friendship and its false doubles. Mary Crawford says: "'Mrs. Fraser has been my intimate friend for years. But I have not the least inclination to go near her.... And when I have done with her, I must go to her sister, Lady Stornaway, because she was rather my most particular friend of the two; but I have not cared much for her these three years'" (MP 359). The basis of Mary's friendship with Mrs. Fraser and Lady Stornaway is self-gratification, the vanity of being admired or given advantages by another person, the pleasure of being flattered by the assurance of another person that one's own actions, however reprehensible, are justifiable, even right, and that one's values are sound, laudable. The same motives give rise to the so-called friendship of Elizabeth Elliot and Mrs. Clay, and even to some extent to that of Emma and Harriet Smith. Some friendships, such as those of Lydia Bennet

and Mrs. Forster, or of Tom Bertram and Yates or Tom's friends at Newmarket, are based on a common liveliness and enjoyment. Although these things are not in themselves wrong they are not a proper basis for real friendship; there is no guarantee that mutual pleasures give rise to mutual concern for one another's welfare.

The relationships between Wentworth and the Harvilles, and between Lizzy Bennet and Charlotte Lucas, might more appropriately be called friendships than any mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Lizzy and Charlotte are joined by a mutual affection, an affection proved by its enduring, even though their values prove very different. Lizzy does not pretend to approve Charlotte's ideas about marriage or to condone Charlotte's acting on those ideas. They are friends neither because they share precisely the same values nor because they are willing to compromise their own values by approving in the other what they believe is wrong. Elizabeth sees Charlotte's motives for marrying Collins as wrong and foolish, but her attachment enables her to accept her friend's decision and the limitations that decision imposes upon Charlotte. Lizzy tries but fails to give Charlotte the benefit of a friend's objectivity; Wentworth, on the other hand, benefits from the objectivity of the Harvilles. He tells Anne Elliot that he had never felt the possibility of attaching himself to Louisa Musgrove, but that the Harvilles had made him understand what his attentions appeared to others: "'I found...that I was considered by Harville an engaged man! That neither Harville nor his wife entertained a doubt of our mutual attachment'" (P 242). Wentworth gives proper weight to the opinion of his friends, accepts the value of an observer who is solicitous of one's well-being. Emma Woodhouse notably fails in this respect, attending properly neither to her brother-in-law's warning that she is Elton's object, nor to Mr.

Knightley's that Frank is attached to Jane Fairfax. These instances are Jane Austen's acknowledgement of the well-nigh impossibility of total objectivity where, to use Anne Elliot's phrase, "dear self is concerned" (P 201).

Although the proof of friendship in Jane Austen's novels lies in the aggregate of one's interaction with another person, is proved by a continuous attempt to promote the happiness and well-being of another person, I have chosen to focus upon what seems to me to be two solid indications of genuine friendship found consistently in the novels. In a society in which material wealth lay principally in the hands of men, and in which women were not expected to live outside the protection of a man or an older woman, it is not surprising that Jane Austen chose the willingness of a brother to give his sister financial support or the security of a home as an important sign of his real good-will towards her. But a more general sign of friendship is found in Jane Austen's use of letters. She sees in the rather pedestrian and insignificant act of letter-writing an indication of one's attention to and interest in another person. In some instances letter-writing is necessary as a means of keeping the reality of the affection one feels for another person, the values one respects in another person, alive in one's imagination.

In Sense and Sensibility John Dashwood fails to fulfil his promise to his father to take care of his step-mother, Elinor, Marianne and Margaret. He neither exerts himself to help them find a new home, nor offers financial assistance, nor even makes them feel very welcome while they remain in his house. His sisters and step-mother are objects of neither affection nor solicitude. Darcy's concern for his sister Georgiana contrasts with Dashwood's indifference towards his sisters. Before Darcy marries he sees that Georgiana has a comfortable home in London and has a proper

companion; when he is at Pemberley, she is made to consider it as still being her home. He exerts himself, as for example his having a room she admires redecorated for her use, to give her pleasure and to make her comfortable. Upon his marriage to Elizabeth, Pemberley becomes "now Georgiana's home" (PP 387). Not only do Darcy and Dashwood represent opposing attitudes towards fraternal responsibilities, we can see here an increasing skill in Jane Austen's use of such details as determinants of action, as well as indications of character. Although John Dashwood's inattention forces his step-mother and sisters to find a home elsewhere and thereby provides the chance for Marianne's meeting with Willoughby, Dashwood's character finally has nothing directly to do with the outcome of the novel. Darcy's relationship with Georgiana, however, is important to our believing his sympathy for the Bennets when Lydia elopes with Wickham (having been through a similar circumstance himself with Georgiana and Wickham), and his sense of sharing responsibility for the event (having insisted that his knowledge of Wickham's true nature be kept secret).[11] Seeing Darcy with his sister, understanding his affection for and attention to her, contributes to Elizabeth's better understanding his personal worth and merit, and consequently exerts considerable power in bringing about the change in her opinion of him that makes possible her coming to love him.

The matter of having a home and being secure in the protection of one's family is particularly significant in Mansfield Park. Mary Crawford is forced to come to the Grants', not only because the Admiral brings his mistress to preside in Hill Street, but because Henry will not give her a home: "[Mary] had tried in vain

[11] See Philip Drew, "A Significant Incident in Pride and Prejudice", NCF, 13 (1959), for an analysis of the connection between Darcy's conduct when Lydia elopes and his sister's planned elopement earlier.

to persuade her brother to settle with her at his own country-house.... To any thing like a permanence of abode, or limitation of society, Henry Crawford had, unluckily, a great dislike; he could not accommodate his sister in an article of such import-ance..." (MP 41). In Jane Austen's scheme of values this is damning evidence of Henry Crawford's insensibility to others, his refusal to sacrifice his own whims for the happiness and security even of his sister. He forces her to live as a guest in other people's houses, denying his own responsibility to her.[12] William Price does not have the means to give Fanny a home, but makes acquiring such means a first aim. He hopes to get enough money "to make the little cottage comfortable, in which he and Fanny were to pass all their middle and latter life together" (MP 375). Fanny knows from William's example what is due her brothers and sisters, and sustains herself in Portsmouth by trying to be useful to them and to increase their comfort. Mary Crawford, who has had no example of placing one's idle self-indulgence beneath a concern for one's family, is instrumental in persuading her brother to stay for Mrs Fraser's party, where he is to meet Maria again, simply because Mary has "a little curiosity" (MP 417) to see them together, to see what will happen. The meeting leads rapidly to their liaison and to the destruction of Mary's happi-ness, as well as her brother's. The failure of both to show any real concern for the conduct or happiness of the other is an integral part of the forces that bring them to this end.

The attention or inattention to fraternal duties in providing a home is confirmed by the habits of letter-writing. Brothers

[12]Mrs. Norris' evading her duty to give Fanny a home emphasizes her failure to fulfil the responsibility she freely undertook at the time of Fanny's adoption.

and sisters who have a real affection and concern for one another are invariably good correspondents in Jane Austen's novels.[13] Darcy's attentiveness to Georgiana is first shown by his letters to her. We discover from his conversation with Miss Bingley that he writes long, conscientious letters to his sister. He not only professes affection for Georgiana, he gives proof by his willingness to take time and trouble to write to her. Fanny Price is disturbed when she arrives at Mansfield, because she has promised to write to William but does not have the materials for writing a letter.[14] The correspondence between William and Fanny is not merely a sign of their attachment, of fulfilling their duty, but the means by which they strengthen their original bond, maintain their abiding interest in each other. Fanny is William's "best correspondent through a period of seven years..." (MP 233), and when he comes to Mansfield at the end of this time, the power of absence over their relationship, the devisive power of the simple fact that they have, during their separation, moved from childhood, is made almost nothing, because their letters have enabled them to remain close to each other in every sense but geographically.[15]

[13] See Lloyd W.Brown, Bits of Ivory (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), especially Chapter VI, which discusses the ways in which characters are revealed by what they write in letters.

[14] Edmund, of course, provides Fanny with the letter-writing materials and is thereby immediately associated with the kindness, solicitude and affection Fanny and William show towards one another.

[15] When Emma Watson's sister is surprised by Emma's ignorance of what has been going on in the family during her absence, Emma points out: "'How should I know it? How should I know in Shropshire, what is passing of that nature in Surry? - It is not likely that circumstances of that delicacy should make any part of the scanty communication which have passed between you & me for the last 14 years'" (MW 320-1).

Mary Crawford admits that Henry is not a good correspondent, but she does not comprehend that his failure is but a small part of a wider neglect. She assumes his fault is common to all brothers, despite Fanny's evidence to the contrary. Fanny later remarks to Edmund: "'I cannot rate so very highly the love or good nature of a brother, who will not give himself the trouble of writing any thing worth reading, to his sisters, when they are separated'" (MP 64). Henry Crawford is no better brother than Lydia Bennet a sister. Lydia "promised to write very often and very minutely to her mother and Kitty; but her letters were always long expected, and always very short" (PP 238). Once married she announces that she is giving up letter-writing altogether! Lydia's fault as a correspondent is shared by her father, who is "on all common occasions, a most negligent and dilatory correspondent" (PP 294). His inattentiveness as a correspondent is of a piece with his inattentiveness to, his general neglect of, the welfare of his daughters. Mary and Elizabeth Elliot will not exert themselves enough to carry on a correspondence, so "all the toil of keeping up a slow and unsatisfactory correspondence with Elizabeth fell on Anne" (P 107). One of the valuable forms for expressing interest and affection is thus reduced to an exercise of duty that is slow, unsatisfactory and tedious.

Letter-writing is not, of course, an unequivocal indication of a generous, unselfish concern for another person. Jane Austen explicitly distinguishes between letters motivated by self-interest and those written for unselfish reasons: "[Dick Musgrove] had, under the influence of his captain, written the only two letters which his father and mother had ever received from him during the whole of his absence; that is to say, the only two disinterested letters; all the rest had been mere applications for money" (P 51). In Mary Crawford's correspondence with Fanny

we see both letter-writing prompted by self-interest, and the dilatoriness and neglect that results when the motives of self-interest are removed. While Fanny is still at Mansfield, she hears "repeatedly from [Mary].... Edmund would never rest till she had read the chief of the letter to him.... - There had, in fact, been so much of message, of allusion, of recollection, so much of Mansfield in every letter, that Fanny could not but suppose it meant for him to hear..." (MP 375-6). Fanny suspects that Mary's letters are not motivated by friendship for her, but by Mary's wish to serve her own interest with Edmund and her brother's interest with Fanny: "When no longer under the same roof with Edmund, she trusted that Miss Crawford would have no motive for writing, strong enough to overcome the trouble, and that at Portsmouth their correspondence would dwindle into nothing" (MP 376). Fanny's perception proves correct. Mary writes first to Portsmouth "after a decidedly longer interval than the last [letter]..." (MP 393), a lapse Mary attributes to increasing engagements and to Henry's not being there to urge her to write. Her next letter is not prompted by any recollection of her obligation - for she has asked Fanny to correspond with her - but by the promptings of her brother: "'He makes me write...'" (MP 415). Just before Fanny receives the third letter from Mary, we are told: "It was so long since Fanny had had any letter from her, that she had some reason to think lightly of the friendship which had been so dwelt on. - It was weeks since she had heard any thing of Miss Crawford..." (MP 433). The infrequency of Mary's letters indicates her failure to fulfil her duty, a duty she herself freely created, to Fanny and thereby cultivate the friendship she had justly valued at Mansfield. Jane Austen uses Mary's letters not simply as a short-cut in narrative to save

herself the trouble of reporting first-hand the events occurring in London.[16] Mary tells us much, but we can deduce even more, for the content of her letters reveals her gradual return to her former values, her London values, and traces her succumbing to the bad influence of her soi-disant friends in London.

Jane Austen uses friendship as an important determinant of action in both Sense and Sensibility and Persuasion. The friendship of Elinor and Colonel Brandon is crucial to the outcome of the novel, but is made to bear more weight than it ought.[17] Jane Austen's economy of method here carries her perilously close to improbability. We understand Elinor's superiority to Marianne through her patient attempts to get to know Colonel Brandon. He is the guardian of the young woman Willoughby seduces, the former admirer of the girl's mother, and the present admirer of Marianne. In addition, he has a living to offer Edward Ferrars which, though meant as a favour to Elinor, seems to insure the marriage of Lucy and Edward. The uniting of so many elements of the novel in Colonel Brandon, though done skilfully and without apparent contrivance, seems to me too concentrated. The chance of Colonel Brandon's being a friend of Sir John Middleton who offers a home to the Dashwoods in the neighbourhood where Willoughby's aunt resides, combines with the chance of his being the guardian

[16] Cf. Joseph M. Duffy, Jr., "Moral Integrity and Moral Anarchy in Mansfield Park", ELH, 23 (1956), which argues that the structure of the novel begins to disintegrate when Fanny goes to Portsmouth, and threatens to collapse under the strain of the epistolary method used in reporting the denouement.

[17] Wiesenfarth notes that Brandon's revelation of Willoughby's true character is the most unfortunate episode in Jane Austen's work. See especially his review of this oft-cited critical view, p.30.

of Eliza Williams, all compounded and complicated by the chance of his suddenly having a living to offer Edward Ferrars. The intricate network of interrelations is perhaps not beyond possibility, but certainly beyond probability. Although the consistently good and unselfish conduct of Elinor and Colonel Brandon contrasts with the reprehensible and selfish conduct of Marianne and Willoughby, Jane Austen does not quite succeed in creating a sense of the way in which good conduct and chance unite to bring about good ends. She conveys more successfully a sense of this union in Persuasion.

The friendship of Anne Elliot and Mrs. Smith functions thematically in a way that that of Elinor and Colonel Brandon is meant to function. Anne Elliot's learning of Mrs. Smith's illness and her residence in Bath for a cure is not purely a matter of chance. Her knowledge originates with an act of kindness: a visit to an old governess, who tells her about Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith has sometimes been considered as having no place in Persuasion save as an awkward contrivance to reveal William Elliot's past to Anne.[18] A deeper pattern suggests Mrs. Smith as an integral part of the novel's praise of genuine friendship and unselfish affection. Her having known Elliot so intimately is certainly a matter of chance, but given the circumstances of her past life, the kind of life she led and people she knew, the probability of the relationship is increased. Anne Elliot considers Mrs. Smith's revelation a reward for her own good conduct: "She had never considered herself as entitled to reward for not slighting an old friend like Mrs. Smith, but here was a reward indeed springing from it!" (P212). But the benefit of their

[18]Cf. Mansell's comments pp.199-200, and his review of earlier critical objections, fn.13, p.199.

friendship is of more importance to Mrs. Smith than to Anne, whose benefit is, after all, purely theoretical, since she is not in love with William Elliot. The reader consequently has little sense of Anne's being saved from any real danger by her friend's revelation. From Mrs. Smith's past, from her kindness to Anne fifteen years before the action of the novel, emerges an undesigned and unexpected reward. Anne not only repays her kindness in the past with attention and affection, she is finally able to enlist Wentworth's aid in improving her friend's reduced circumstances. Jane Austen conveys a deep and delightful sense of wonder at the undesigned and unexpected rewards that chance might bring, but that result directly from good conduct motivated by nothing but kind and unselfish feelings towards another human being, as was Mrs. Smith's towards Anne Elliot when they were school girls.

The dénouement of Mansfield Park depends, at its most immediate level, upon the quality of friendship and familial ties, and in it we are able to see the importance of genuine friendship as an animating element in familial relationships. The dénouement begins with Crawford's being persuaded by Mary to stay for Mrs. Fraser's party, an act which shows not only her own lack of concern for the well-being of Crawford, but for the happiness of Maria and Fanny, who are meant to be her friends. Crawford neglects his professional duty at Everingham, as I shall discuss in the next section of this chapter, to stay in London. All the possibilities of a destructive force that his decision brings into being are countered by another event, which also, ironically, grows out of a neglect of professional and familial duty: Tom Bertram's illness. Tom has given himself over to idle indulgences rather than sharing in the duties of his father on the estate, duties incumbent upon him as its heir. Jane Austen specifically

mentions this as an important aspect of Tom's later reform: "He became what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not living merely for himself" (MP 462). At Newmarket Tom abuses his own good health by excessive drinking, which leads to a fall, which in turn brings on a fever. He has not only eschewed the support doing his duty to his father might have given; he puts himself in the power of people he calls friends, but who evidently care nothing for his welfare, physical or moral: "...when the party broke up, being unable to move, [Tom] had been left by himself at the house of one of these young men, to the comforts of sickness and solitude, and the attendance only of servants" (MP 426). Tom, who has always thought only of his own pleasure, now pays for his careless attitude towards other people by falling victim to thoughtlessness equal to his own.

Ironically, Tom's illness creates barriers to virtue to replace those destroyed by Crawford's staying in London. The dangerous state of his health ought to have recalled Maria and Julia to a duty higher than that of self-gratification, ought to have evoked real concern for their brother. But his illness is incompatible with their pleasures. Even Mary Crawford expresses disapproval at his sisters' failure to go to Mansfield to see Tom, although they know he may be dying: "'...it strikes me, that [Maria and Julia] have all along been so unwilling to have their own amusements cut up, as to shut their eyes to the truth'" (MP 434). Maria and Julia have neither affection for, nor a sense of duty to, Tom to guide them in their conduct, only a selfish pursuit of personal pleasures. Fanny notes their failure: "It astonished her that Tom's sisters could be satisfied with remaining in London at such a time - through an illness, which had now, under different degrees of danger, lasted several weeks..." (MP 432). Maria ignores all duties in order to pursue her adultery with

Crawford. She not only evades her duty to Tom, she uses familial duty as a means of getting rid of Rushworth so that he cannot interfere with the progress of her affair with Crawford. Mary Crawford gives Maria "'credit for promoting [Rushworth's] going dutifully down to Bath, to fetch his mother...'" (MP 435). Julia, remembering the past and afraid of her own attraction to Crawford, removes herself from Rushworth's house, leaving her sister without even the nominal barrier of her presence. She moves to save herself from pain, but will not give up her pleasure in London to attend her brother.

With neither sister nor husband present, without a sense of duty to her brother, Maria now uses her friends to promote her vice rather than her virtue. The Aylmers are friends only because they provide Maria with the appearance of propriety while condoning her affair with Crawford: "Mrs. Rushworth had gone...to Twickenham, with a family whom she had just grown intimate with - a family of lively, agreeable manners, and probably of morals and discretion to suit - for to <u>their</u> house Mr. Crawford had constant access at all times (MP 450). Maria rejects the support of familial and conjugal duties and places herself in circumstances where there is nothing to support or encourage her right conduct.

Edmund and Fanny contrast with Maria and Julia. Edmund responds at once to his brother's needs. He goes to Newmarket to attend Tom and brings him back to Mansfield. His own inclination is to return to London and propose to Mary, but he stays at Mansfield, doing whatever he can for Tom. He leaves his brother only when he is required to go to London to help his father try to trace Maria and Julia. Upon his return, his attendance of Tom becomes positively beneficial to himself, for he tries "to bury his own feelings in exertions for the relief of his brother's ..." (MP 449). Fanny's usefulness to Susan at Portsmouth, her

attending to Susan's moral improvement, parallels Edmund's usefulness to Tom, his attending to Tom's physical improvement. Just as Edmund wishes to be in London, Fanny wishes to be at Mansfield; but both remain in the place where their duties lie, rather than throwing off their duties by changing their situations from one place to another. Jane Austen suggests that the temptation to do evil is rarely a direct temptation, but a temptation to omit the fulfilment of some duty and then another and another, leading finally to the evil which comes about, not so much by design, as by accident born of neglect in doing right. Whereas Maria, Julia, Henry and Mary live in a general state of moral neutrality, of idle inattention to good conduct rather than the active pursuit of wickedness, Fanny and Edmund try to fulfil those duties and obligations which ground their actions in goodness, thereby forming barriers against evil.

The quality common to the best friendships and fraternal relationships is disinterested affection, a quality Jane Austen finds crucial in distinguishing between passion that is a part of genuine love and passion that is only a selfish desire to possess another person.[19] Darcy's arranging the marriage of Lydia and Wickham springs from disinterested affection for Elizabeth. He is prepared to act, not for any benefit to himself, but for the purpose of lessening Elizabeth's pain in the ruin of her sister. Darcy's motives are without the design of making her obliged to him, as Henry Crawford tries to make Fanny obliged to him through his securing William's promotion. Darcy tries to accomplish his

[19] Juliet McMaster, "The Continuity of Jane Austen's Novels", SEL, 10 (1970) notes: "In Jane Austen's world...it is not the act of physical bravery that inspires love so much as the act of consideration, like Mr. Knightley's 'rescue' of Harriet...or Frederick Wentworth's deliverance of Anne from the children in Persuasion", p.743.

kindness in secrecy, and when Lizzy tells him that she has discovered his role in bringing about the marriage, he assures her: "'I am sorry, exceedingly sorry...that you have ever been informed of what may, in a mistaken light, have given you uneasiness'" (PP 365-6). The "mistaken light" certainly refers either to the possibility of her feeling his act as a reprimand to herself for her previous accusations against him, or to his attempting to make her obliged to him. He admits the part his affection for her played in determining his conduct: "'That the wish of giving happiness to you, might add force to the other inducements which led me on, I shall not attempt to deny'" (PP 366). We find again a similar concern in Mr. Knightley's attention to Emma. He criticizes her, because he is solicitous of her happiness and concerned for her good conduct. When he returns from London, having heard of Frank's engagement, his first consideration is for Emma's feelings. He comes neither to remind her of his own correct judgment nor of her past misjudgment. He desires to comfort Emma in the pain he imagines she is suffering. The discovery that she is not suffering - at least, not for the reason he has expected - and that she was not in love with Frank, gives him the hope and the courage to declare his love. His unselfish consideration in coming to comfort her gives him the opportunity.

The disinterested solicitude of both Darcy and Mr.Knightley is directed towards the peace of mind of their ladies. In Mansfield Park and Persuasion Jane Austen makes the consideration of Wentworth for Anne Elliot's health, and that of Edmund and Crawford for Fanny's health important signs of the quality of their affection. When Wentworth perceives that Anne is fatigued by their long walk, he suggests to his sister that Anne be conveyed in their gig: "Though condemning her for the past, and considering it with high and unjust resentment, though perfectly

careless of her, and though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer, without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship; it was a proof of his own warm and amiable heart..." (P 91). Wentworth is a model of disinterested affection, attending to Anne's needs not because his own happiness is dependent upon hers, but because whatever his personal resentment, he will prevent her suffering when it is within his power. His kindness is like that of Mr. Knightley to Jane Fairfax, is comparable to Mr. Knightley's insisting that Miss Bates put an end to Jane's singing. Frank Churchill is too interested in his own delight and gratification in singing with her to be attentive to Jane's health. Frank's carelessness and thoughtlessness is a shadow of Henry Crawford's terrible selfishness, his inability to think of the well-being of another person without seeing an immediate benefit to himself.

Fanny Price's uncertain health is a touchstone by which we are able to distinguish Edmund's disinterested affection from Crawford's self-interested love. Henry tries to turn the decline in Fanny's health at Portsmouth to his own advantage. He tells Susan that Fanny "'ought never to be long banished from the free air, and liberty of the country'" (MP 411), and in offering to take Fanny back to Mansfield reminds her of the faults of the family at Mansfield towards her: "'I know the danger of your being so far forgotten, as to have your comforts give way to the imaginary convenience of any single being in the family'" (MP 410). Crawford is now in the same position Edmund was in when the grey pony died: he apprehends the decline in Fanny's health; he understands the cause and the remedy; he sees the demerits of the others for not attending to Fanny's needs. She refuses his offer, but this does

not relieve him of his responsibility as her friend to find a way to help her. Mrs.Norris and Lady Bertram have objected to replacing Fanny's pony during Sir Thomas' absence, but Edmund finds a way to help Fanny without doing anything his father would not approve.

Crawford, though, is more interested in the credit he can take for Fanny's well-being than in the value of her good health in itself. He does not forget that Fanny's health is in a decline - Mary writes twice to repeat their offer - but he does not seem to have told Edmund of Fanny's decline. Edmund says he saw Crawford in town but says nothing about having heard of Fanny's loss of good health. His past attentiveness gives some weight to inferring that the Crawfords have told him nothing. When Edmund fetches Fanny from Portsmouth, he notes immediately her physical change; he is "particularly struck by the alteration in Fanny's looks..." (MP 446). His surprise implies further that he has received no hint from Crawford about the change Portsmouth has worked on Fanny. Even Fanny's health, a matter so personal, so <u>physically</u> separate from Crawford himself, he makes a function of his own self-gratification, sees only as a means for achieving his own end, which is not to relieve Fanny but to bring credit to himself. His desire to help her extends no further than a desire to please himself. Crawford is not satisfied by knowing Fanny is well and happy; he must have the selfish glory of having himself brought it about, must contrive to make her directly obligated to him. He may love Fanny after a fashion, but his love is corrupted by the lack of disinterested affection that would make him wish for her well-being, whether he receives credit or not, whether his own happiness is directly dependent upon her or not.

The best qualities of fraternal affection and friendship are the proper foundation for romantic love. Jane Austen considers

this obliquely in Pride and Prejudice by having Elizabeth's love for Darcy grow out of her understanding his value as a brother to Georgiana and as a friend to his tenants, to the Gardiners, and finally to her own family: "If gratitude and esteem are good foundations of affection, Elizabeth's change of sentiment will be neither improbable nor faulty. But if otherwise, if the regard springing from such sources is unreasonable or unnatural, in comparison of what is so often described as arising on a first interview with its object, and even before two words have been exchanged, nothing can be said in her defence, except that she had given somewhat of a trial to the latter method, in her partiality for Wickham, and that its ill-success might perhaps authorise her to seek the other less interesting mode of attachment" (PP 279). The marriage of Edmund and Fanny in Mansfield Park grows directly out of their past relationships, their fraternal affection and their friendship, and unites these two aspects of love with romantic love:

> With such a regard for her, indeed, as his had long been, a regard founded on the most endearing claims of innocence and helplessness, and completed by every recommendation of growing worth, what could be more natural than the change? Loving, guiding, protecting her, as he had been doing ever since her being ten years old, her mind in so great a degree formed by his care, and her comfort depending on his kindness, an object to him of such close and peculiar interest, dearer by all his own importance with her than any one else at Mansfield, what was there now to add, but that he should learn to prefer soft light eyes to sparkling dark ones (MP 470)

Emma finally understands that she loves Mr. Knightley and that familial affection and friendship have been intimations of and are now essential parts of their romantic love. She sees that "from family attachment and habit, and thorough excellence of mind, he had loved her, and watched over her from a girl, with an endeavour to improve her, and an anxiety for her doing right, which no other creature had at all shared" (E 415). Mr. Knightley might

wryly respond, "'Brother and sister! No, indeed'" (E 331), when Emma suggests that they are not so much brother and sister to make it improper for them to dance together, and he might at first balk at her saying she will hear as a friend what he has to say when he returns from London after Frank's engagement is revealed, but their romantic love grows out of their former relationships. When Emma is a child and he a young man he behaves as a brother to her; when she begins to grow up he is her friend; and when she becomes a young woman their former affection ripens into mature romantic love.

Although the relationships of Fanny and Edmund, and of Emma and Mr. Knightley, follow a similar pattern, Jane Austen does not mean the reader to take her point as strictly literal - that a woman can only marry a man who has been a brother to her. Elizabeth Bennet comes to value Darcy because he possesses the best qualities of a brother and a friend. In Mansfield Park the possibility of Henry Crawford's fulfilling Fanny's expectations in a husband derives from his connection with William Price.[20] Edmund has the advantage of actually having functioned as a surrogate brother to Fanny, but Fanny's love for William makes credible the possibility of her transferring her romantic affection from Edmund to Crawford. Fanny claims to be depressed by Henry's high spirits, but she is entranced by her brother's liveliness, is animated by it, and connects it with all the goodness she values in him. By forming this link Jane Austen creates a logical possibility of Fanny's

[20] Gilbert Ryle points out the important part the relationship of Fanny and William has in the novel: "The real hero of the story is Fanny's brother, William. He is gay, affectionate, vigorous, straight and brave, and he makes Fanny happy. It is their brother-sister love which is the paradigm against which to assess all the others. Fanny's love for her cousin Edmund had begun as child's love for a deputy-William", p.113.

coming to love Crawford as deeply as she loves Edmund, for such love to proceed from the affection she has for William. Fraternal affection and friendship are of utmost importance in Jane Austen's novels, because they reveal the value of disinterested affection, accustom one to attending to the needs and feeling of others, and thereby provide a broad and comprehensive insight into the best possibilities of love that flattery, ambition or sexual attraction alone cannot give.

3: Profession

The theme of profession appears restricted both by sex and class. That is, in Jane Austen's world only the men follow professions and only clergymen, army and naval officers, and landowners are represented. Jane Austen is aware of both restrictions, and works, particularly in her later novels, to present a view of profession that encompasses in its implications both men and women and that transcends the idea of value inherent in the forms of the professions common to the social class her novels centre upon. She shows here, as in her investigation of manners, an impatience with an inordinate exaltation of form in itself. Jane Austen comprehends that the values which give worth to men in professions or who own estates, give equal worth to men in trade or who are farmers.[21] Without these values neither professions nor other occupations have any real merit. She considers marriage as an opportunity for women not only to acquire domestic duties analogous to their husband's professional duties, but to participate and share fully in his work.[22]

[21] Duckworth, The Improvement of Estate, points out the importance of profession in most of Jane Austen's novels and notes the parallel between men with professions and men of lower rank. See especially his discussion of profession in Mansfield Park, pp.61-70, and in Emma, pp. 155-6.

[22] Nina Auerbach, "'O Brave New World": Evolution and Revolution in Persuasion", ELH, 39 (1972), discusses woman's place in profession as shown in Persuasion, p.123ff.

The woman's part in her husband's professional life emphasizes the importance of the choice of a husband, and marks a difference between men and women, however much marriage may redress the inequality imposed by society. The inequality is most apparent in the difference profession makes to the masculine and feminine visions of romantic love. When Anne Elliot and Harville argue whether the affection of men or women endures longest, Anne notes the part profession plays in a man's ability to recover from an unfulfilled love: "'We certainly do not forget you, so soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home, quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual occupation and change soon weaken impressions" (P 232).[23] Anne Elliot - and I think we may assume that here she speaks Jane Austen's opinion - understands that however laudable the tendency of women not to forget romantic attachments so soon as men, their "fate" is as much dictated by social circumstances as by nature.

The value of exertion for men or women has little mention in Northanger Abbey. Neither the professions of the men nor the lack of professions of the women signifies much in that holiday world. In Sense and Sensibility Jane Austen considers the possible benefits of accomplishments as objects of exertion for women, but as I discussed in Chapter I, she seems finally to have decided that possessing these accomplishments could be worse than having none at all. Edward Ferrars' decision to take orders, though only given perfunctory attention, is in retrospect more significant, of greater value, than Elinor's drawing. Profession takes a more

[23]Auerbach notes this point.

prominent place in Pride and Prejudice, but still it has little to do directly with Lizzy Bennet herself. In Darcy's role as landowner she discovers laudatory aspects of his character that she had not known before. Whereas wit, carelessness and frivolity reign at Longbourne, and the necessities of provision and exertion are ignored, good sense and personal exertion rule at Pemberley. Darcy offers Elizabeth not a new life, an alternative to that at Longbourne, but a life in which the virtues of them both can be expanded. But Jane Austen has still not faced squarely the inequality between men and women caused by profession and the problems born of that inequality.

In the later novels the question of what women can and ought to do to redress the imbalance becomes a principal concern. The dilemma of Fanny Price is that of a woman who must seek out objects for exertion. At Mansfield she fills her time fetching and carrying, playing cards, and doing the difficult parts of Lady Bertram's fringework. In Portsmouth Fanny has not even these trivial duties to occupy and sustain her, but she finds "an object of that needful solicitude" (MP 8) in her sister Susan. Both Fanny Price and Anne Elliot find themselves without specific duties, without any duties at all animated by affection and encouraged by just appreciation. They submit to serving the unworthy, the undeserving, and thereby achieve a humility and a selfless generosity that sustain them in times of personal pain and grief.[24] The lack of definite duties presents a great obstacle to both young women but they submit to the trial of "knowing our own nothingness beyond our own circle" (P 42). In their marriages they escape not from utter misery but from

[24] John Pikoulis, "Jane Austen: The Figure in the Carpet", NCF, 27 (1972), offers a good discussion of Jane Austen's emphasizing hesitance of judgment and the value of silence and humility.

the necessity of seeking fulfilment without the consolation and animation of love.

Emma Woodhouse, in contrast, believes that she is and always will be fulfilled by her role at Hartfield:

> 'If I know myself, Harriet, mine is an active, busy mind, with a great many independent resources; and I do not perceive why I should be more in want of employment at forty or fifty than one-and-twenty. Woman's usual occupations of eye and hand and mind will be as open to me then, as they are now; or with no important variation. If I draw less, I shall read more; if I give up music, I shall take to carpet-work. And as for objects of interest, objects for the affections, which is in truth the great point of inferiority, the want of which is really the great evil to be avoided in not marrying, I shall be very well off, with all the children of a sister I love so much, to care about' (E 85).

As is so often the case with Emma, her speech is a mixture of truth and fancy, reasonableness and foolishness, maturity and naivety. The greatest fault lies not so much in her theory as in her practice. We already know how little attention Emma gives to her drawing, and that her reading has not progressed much beyond the making of lists of what she intends to read. Later we learn that she lacks application in her musical skills. In truth Emma has little employment beyond her attempts to arrange the lives of other people. The irony in Emma's speech lies in that truth which she speaks without fully comprehending it in her heart. Once she is awakened to the real need for love and to the fullest possibilities of that love, she understands the inferiority of the life she has earlier considered perfect: "If all took place that might take place among the circle of her friends, Hartfield must be comparatively deserted; and she left to cheer her father with the spirits only of ruined happiness" (E 422). Those employments that have previously seemed to Emma so complete, those occupations with which Anne and Fanny have

been forced to sustain themselves, are now seen in a new light: without the animation of love, romantic love, these things can only sustain, not fulfil; the greater happiness promised by romantic love is lost.

Jane Austen's early heroines face only the unhappiness of an immediate loss, but Fanny, Emma and Anne suffer the possibility of losses that will determine their happiness for the rest of their lives. Before Jane Austen rewards them with romantic fulfilment she brings them to a full awareness of what their fates might have been.[25] Employment and occupation might sustain but they do not animate; this is a truth that makes Jane Fairfax's prospects as a governess so terrifying. Jane Austen found in her art her proper object of interest, of needful solicitude, and she lavishes on her novels all the attention, love, affection, principles and rigorous objectivity that she expected parents to show their children.[26] But Jane Austen recognized her gift as something quite extraordinary and not to be counted on.[27] She considers the problems of employment, of

[25] Professor Hardy points out that Jane Austen's "is not a darkening vision, even though the three later heroines steadily contemplate solitude before they are fortunately allowed to deserve love", p.133.

[26] In her letters Jane Austen sometimes speaks of her novels as her children. She writes: "No indeed, I am never too busy to think of S & S. I can no more forget it, than a mother can forget her suckling child..." (L 272); and when the first copy of Pride and Prejudice arrives: "I want to tell you that I have got my own darling child from London; on Wednesday I received one copy sent down by Falknor..." (L 279).

[27] Cf. Barbara Hardy: "Like most other women novelists before this century, Jane Austen never writes about being a novelist. She keeps to the highroad of average experience.... In her recent book, Reader, I Married Him, Patricia Beer suggests that Jane Austen's refusal to make her women talented condemns them for a personal lack of creativity. It seems more likely that the lack of professional creativity is a deliberate attempt to define social conditions at their most representative and unexceptional. The exceptional woman proves nothing. So it is in the unexceptional woman that she finds a representative image", p.184.

profession in her novels with regard to women of ordinary talents and expectations, thus giving the truth she reflects the widest possible application for her audience.

Jane Austen's treatment of the professions of men suggest some of the problems her women face. In Sense and Sensibility Edward Ferrars is faced with a dilemma that, however unusual for a man, was the common lot of middle-class women of the time. Edward's great demerit is his lack of an aim, an object to give his life shape and direction. Mrs. Dashwood points this out: "'I think, Edward... you would be a happier man if you had any profession to engage your time and give an interest to your plans and actions'" (SS 102). Edward agrees: "'It has been, and is, and probably will always be a heavy misfortune to me, that I have had no necessary business to engage me; no profession to give me employment, or afford me any thing like independence'" (SS 102). This is the plight of most of Jane Austen's heroines: they suffer from being dependent upon others, from having no fixed employment to sustain them or to give their lives direction.

Edward is dependent upon his mother's whim, and, to a certain degree, Frank Churchill is restricted in the same way. He has no profession, although it is assumed he will one day inherit his uncle's estate. But for the moment his life is divided between his having nothing to do but seek idle pleasures to fill his time, and his having to acquiesce to his aunt's demands. Without any professional duties to demand his attention, he is left open to the problems born of a strange combination of idle independence and rigorous dependence. Frank is not only similar to Emma in his high spirits and in his tendency to be careless of the feelings of others; his situation is analogous to her own. She too is without any duty except that of attending a whimsical

hypochondriac; she too is left with time to fill however she fancies. Both their lives combine the worse dangers of both dependence and independence.

Tom Bertram, like Edward and Frank, has no profession, but he is not restricted as they are. Tom comes closer to disaster than either of them, a catastrophe for which he has complete responsibility. His independence corresponds to that of Emma and Frank, but his pursuit of his own pleasures, of following his own impulses, is never significantly impeded by any dependence upon another person. But the principal focus in Mansfield Park is upon the dangerous independence of Mary Crawford and the dangerous dependence of Fanny Price. Mary's selfish habits, resulting in part at least from her independence, lead her to underestimate the value of the man she loves, a mistake stemming from her inability to comprehend the worth of his profession;[28] whereas Fanny's dependence upon her uncle subjects her to pressure to do what she knows is wrong, to marry a man she does not love. Mary denigrates Edmund's profession, and she persuades her brother to place curiosity and social pleasures above his duties on his estate, thereby opening that opportunity which leads to his adultery with Maria.

Profession has the capacity to help one sustain his moral probity, avoid the follies and vices born of idleness, but it is by no means a guarantee of virtue. Jane Austen shows that a profession can be, like fraternal ties, "worse than nothing" (MP 235). Although little is made of Willoughby's duties at Combe Magna, however perfectly he performs his duties there, the

[28]For detailed discussions of the various conversations about profession, particularly the clergy, see David R. Carroll, "Mansfield Park, Daniel Deronda and Ordination", MP, 62 (1965), and Babb, pp.145-75.

income gives him enough independence to acquire a taste for a life of self-indulgence. Jane Austen explores the idea in greater detail in Mansfield Park. Rushworth's wealth gives him the means for gratifying his stupid - though not really immoral - desires; but his stupidity does lead him to neglect his estate and its tenants. The cottages are derelict, are "a disgrace" according to Maria. Crawford is not so much interested in using his income from Everingham to buy a wife (as Sotherton buys Maria for Rushworth) but rather to buy time to exercise his charm with which he purchases women's love. But he shares with Rushworth a neglect of his estate and tenants, a neglect that finally is connected with his loss of Fanny Price.

Mr. Collins and Dr. Grant are to the clergy what Rushworth and Crawford are to estate owners. The former are as much spiritually and morally absent from their parishes as the latter are physically and morally absent from their estates. Contrary to Fanny's too charitable view of Dr. Grant the evidence indicates that he is very much a Sunday clergyman whose sermons have no connection to his private life. Mr. Collins takes his profession as only a mark of his self-importance, and admits without realizing it that he sees his profession only as a matter of form. After reading the letter Collins writes to Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth "was chiefly struck with... his kind intention of christening, marrying, and burying his parishioners whenever it were required" (PP 64). Collins conforms to the ideas Henry and Mary Crawford have of clergymen, conceiving their duties as no more than that of preaching occasional sermons. The debate that runs through Mansfield Park is not over the truth or falseness of Mary's ideas about the clergy, but rather the limitations of her ad hominem argument, which does not admit the possibility of good clergymen. Jane Austen never confuses a profession with the men who follow it.

Jane Austen indicates that the professions common to the upper middle-class and the landed gentry are not innately superior to the occupations of lower social ranks. The principal difference is the scope of responsibility. Elizabeth Bennet realizes of Darcy's duties: "As a brother, a landlord, a master, she considered how many people's happiness were in his guardianship! - How much of pleasure or pain it was in his power to bestow! - How much of good or evil must be done by him!" (PP 250-1). And when the group at Mansfield discusses Dr. Grant's demerits as a clergyman, Fanny points out that had he brought his temper to another profession, many more people would have suffered than do from his present occupation. Jane Austen admits then that although one profession might carry greater responsibility than another because of the number of people directly affected by one's performance of duty, the crucial thing is for one to recognize and fulfil completely the full range of his duties, whether they are limited to providing for his family and being a good tenant on an estate, or encompass the welfare of family and tenants and include magisterial duties (as in Mr.Knightley's case). Mr. Price's inadequacy in providing for his family may not be so widely damaging as Crawfords neglect at Everingham, Rushworth's at Sotherton, Sir Walter Elliot's at Kellynch, or John Dashwood's enclosure of the commons at Norland, but he is finally as culpable as they in his neglect of his responsibility.

Darcy is disturbed that Elizabeth Bennet's uncle Gardiner is in trade, a fact he alludes to in his letter to her after she has refused his first proposal: "'The situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison of that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself...'" (PP 198). He is at this point in the

novel still too conscious of his own superior rank to be fully just to those who have not his advantages of birth. When he meets the Gardiners at Pemberley, he has to revalue his opinion not only of the man but his automatic denigration of anyone in trade. He learns the worth of Mr. Gardiner as an individual and realizes at last that the man's being in trade does not preclude his being of high value. Jane Austen does not by mere chance end Pride and Prejudice with the assurance of the continuing intimacy between the Gardiners and the Darcys: "With the Gardiners, they were always on the most intimate terms. Darcy, as well as Elizabeth, really loved them..." (PP 388). Darcy's understanding of the value of a man whose situation is very different from his own increases; he learns to respect the good sense, sound principles and adherence to duty of a man whom formerly he would have considered beneath his notice.

Emma Woodhouse learns a similar lesson. She makes a great distinction between Mr.Knightley and Robert Martin, as I discussed in Chapter II. But we perceive early in the novel that Martin and Mr.Knightley share a firm sense of the importance of their responsibilities on the land. Emma urges Harriet not to marry Martin, because he will be "'totally inattentive to appearances, and thinking of nothing but profit and loss... How much his business engrosses him already, is very plain...'" (E 33). Ironically, Mr. Knightley is equally engrossed in the business of his estate; his capital is tied up in the land and not used for his personal gratification or even convenience and comfort; he prefers his daily life to social amusements. Mr.Knightley admits to Emma that he would rather be at home looking over his accounts than attending the Westons' ball, a remark that reminds the reader of Robert Martin's thinking of profit and loss. Emma has valued the lively

sociability of Frank Churchill above the sound character indicated by Mr.Knightley's attention to his estate. When she recognizes the proper worth, the merit of Mr.Knightley, she implicitly comes to a juster estimation of Robert Martin's value.

Emma and Darcy view profession socially, invest it with a social worth, a mistake, however, less serious than Mary Crawford's materialistic view. Jane Austen considers profession from a moral viewpoint. The centre of her ethical value of profession lies in her belief in exertion and fulfilling one's responsibilities. Darcy and Mr. Gardiner, Mr. Knightley and Robert Martin all perform their professional duties well, all strive to fulfil their obligations fully in order to promote the happiness and well-being of all who are dependent upon them.

In Pride and Prejudice and Emma Jane Austen suggests a proper value of individuals and their professions regardless of social rank or association. But she goes further in Persuasion, approving a social mobility, only obliquely hinted in her earlier work.[29] She contrasts men who exert themselves and those who muddle along in the assurance of their birthright. The idea is implicit in the contrast of Mr.Bennet, who lives comfortably on his entailed estate with no thought of possible future impecunity of his wife and daughters, with his brother-in-law Gardiner, who works to establish himself and his family in comfort and security. In Persuasion Sir Walter Elliot is heir to the best material and social advantages - an estate and a baronetcy - but he neglects his estate, lives beyond his means, spends his daughters' portions, and finally is forced to let his estate to pay his debts.[30] Admiral

[29] Cf. Barbara Hardy: "Jane Austen's societies are restricted in their class composition, though the vague fringe suggests mobility, upwards and downwards", p.106.

[30] Malcolm Bradbury, "Persuasion Again", EIC, 18 (1968) notes that the aristocrats in Persuasion fail to fulfil their duties. He considers the question of on whom these duties now devolve central to the novel.

Croft, in contrast, has risen in the naval ranks through his own exertions, his adherence to the duties of his profession. We see foreshadowed in his success that of Captain Wentworth. Sir Walter objects to the naval profession because it is "'the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of...'" (P 19). This possibility is precisely Jane Austen's reason for admiring the profession. While the fortunes of Croft and Wentworth rise, not by mere chance but because they have accepted chance and risk and have exerted themselves in the face of uncertainty and danger, the fortunes of Sir Walter fall, not by chance but because he has not even exerted himself enough to maintain his advantages, to protect the comfort and security of a position he inherited rather than earned. Jane Austen does not insist on the superiority of the navy to the estate, but she especially admires the openness of the navy to provide the opportunity to men to be useful and the chance to be rewarded for that usefulness. Naval officers are laudable because they must exert themselves if they are to rise, and the chances that bring them the opportunity to exercise their skills, their merit, usually bring at the same time the possibility of death. Estate owners do not have to confront such dangers; they are required only to maintain in security and comfort the situation into which they are born.

The responsibility one must take for his professional duties parallels the responsibility one must take for one's decision to marry. Jane Austen thus connects profession and romantic love and moves closer to the part women can take in profession. Edward Ferrars' assertion of his independence by taking orders is prompted by his sense of responsibility to honour his engagement to Lucy Steele. In Mansfield Park Jane Austen examines most closely the

analogy between profession and romantic love, the duties and responsibilities common to both. Mary Crawford evades her responsibility of deciding whether or not to marry Edmund Bertram by seeking the advice of friends in London who do not know Edmund and cannot properly estimate his real worth when they meet him.[31] Mary's failure to accept responsibility is emphasized by her part in persuading her brother to neglect both his duty on his estate and his responsibility to Fanny. Crawford abdicates responsibility for his own conduct, allows others to shape his conduct. The analogy between profession and romantic love is implied in his speech to Fanny explaining his plan to return to Everingham:

> 'I have half an idea of going into Norfolk again soon. I am not satisfied about Maddison. - I am sure he still means to impose on me if possible, and get a cousin of his own into a certain mill, which I design for somebody else. - I must come to an understanding with him. I must make him know that I will not be tricked on the south side of Everingham, any more than on the north, that I will be master of my own property. I was not explicit enough with him before. - The mischief such a man does on an estate, both as to the credit of his employer, and the welfare of the poor, is inconceivable. I have a great mind to go back into Norfolk directly, and put every thing at once on such a footing as cannot be afterwards swerved from. - Maddison is a clever fellow; I do not wish to displace him - provided he does not try to displace me; - but it would be simple to be duped by a man who has no right of creditor to dupe me - and worse than simple to let him give me a hard-hearted, griping fellow for a tenant, instead of an honest man, to whom I have given half a promise already' (MP 411-412).

Henry Crawford proves not to have the constancy required to carry out his responsibility to his tenants or to the woman he loves.

[31] The theme of the evils of asking for or giving matrimonial advice recurs frequently in Jane Austen's novels. Lucy Steele constantly presses Elinor for advice, and Elinor always refuses to give an opinion. Emma Woodhouse claims that she will not advise Harriet, but she does not follow the dictates of her own good sense. The problem is, though, most fully explored in Persuasion.

The parallels are exact. We never hear of the outcome to his tenants of his not going to Everingham, but we see the consequences of his failure to be faithful to Fanny, which comes about as a direct result of his failure to go to Everingham.

On the romantic love side of the analogy, Mary Crawford acts in the role of Maddison. She carelessly and thoughtlessly, though unconsciously, dupes her brother by urging him to stay in London for Mrs. Fraser's party. His meeting there with Maria sets in motion the chain of events leading to their liaison, which cuts him off from the possibility of a marriage to Fanny, to whom he has indeed given more than half a promise. The relationship of brother and sister and of landlord and agent is reciprocal. Crawford's neglect of his estate invites the imposition of his agent, and his neglect of his sister, by refusing, for example, to make a home for her at Everingham, invites her imposition. He has been unwilling to sacrifice his pleasures to attend properly his duties as landowner and brother. Now Mary never considers sacrificing her pleasure, her vulgar curiosity, for the promotion of her brother's duty and happiness. Mary has no conception of the real value of profession, and her part in her brother's neglect of his professional duty makes it fitting that she too suffer the consequences of his neglect.

The correspondence of public and private values, of professional and romantic values, is imaged in objects which connect the two. In Pride and Prejudice, Mansfield Park and Emma, Pemberley, Sotherton, Everingham and Donwell all reflect the personal as well as the professional values of the owners. But Jane Austen is aware that the material wealth signified by the estates could take greater weight in the reader's mind than the moral values signified. Some critics have, for example, maintained that

Elizabeth Bennet is impressed by the material splendour of Pemberley, which determines her to marry Darcy.[32] In Mansfield Park and Persuasion Jane Austen uses objects far more insignificant materially than estates to reflect personal values and to associate those values with profession.

Captain Harville's ill-health, the result of a wound suffered in naval battle, has made him unable to pursue his profession and has placed the Harvilles in reduced material circumstances. Although he has evidently performed his professional duties fully and fearlessly, Harville lacks the material trappings of professional success. But he has not suffered a diminishing of principle, of kindness and unselfishness, reflected in the generous hospitality he and his family offer Wentworth's party at Lyme. Harville's profession has been more than a means of making money; its greater importance Anne Elliot sees signified by certain objects in the Harville's house:

> The varieties in the fitting-up of the rooms, where the common necessaries provided by the owner, in the common indifferent plight, were contrasted with some few articles of a rare species of wood, excellently worked up, and with something curious and valuable from all the distant countries Captain Harville had visited, were more than amusing to Anne: connected as it all was with his profession, the fruit of its labours, the effect of its influence on his habits, the picture of repose and domestic happiness it presented, made it to her something more, or less, than gratification (P 98)[33].

The description moves from present circumstances to past and indicates that the past exertions, habits and values of Harville's profession continue to inform and support him and his family in

[32] Sir Walter Scott was the first, though by no means the last, critic to misinterpret Lizzy's response to Pemberley. See Walter Scott, No.8, in Critical Heritage, ed. B.C. Southam, pp.58-69.

[33] Cf. Barbara Hardy, pp.163-4.

their present misfortune. Harville's public and private, his professional and domestic, lives are harmonized and made one by the sound values that are the basis of both.

Objects similar to Harville's memorabilia are at the centre of the amber cross sequence in Mansfield Park.[34] The cross itself first signifies the Christian values shared by Fanny and William Price. William's having purchased it for Fanny in the course of his naval duties - like the curious and valuable objects acquired by Harville - gives it the additional significance of being associated with his profession. The same values inform his professional and private life. The cross unites the themes of religious principle, profession and fraternal affection. To these important associations are added the values of friendship and romantic love through the chain that Edmund gives Fanny for the cross and the necklace that Crawford gives her. Fanny associates the cross with both William's kind generosity as a brother and with his professional value. Like Sir Thomas, she sees in William's professional worth his personal worth: "[William's] recitals were amusing in themselves to Sir Thomas, but the chief object in seeking them, was to understand the recitor, to know the young man by his histories; and he listened to his clear, simple, spirited details with full satisfaction - seeing in them, the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness - every thing that could deserve or promise well" (MP 236). Fanny places no monetary value on possessions but considers things valuable for their associations - for example,

[34] For other discussions of the amber cross see Barbara Hardy, "The Objects in Mansfield Park", in Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin; David Ellis, "The Irony of Mansfield Park", CR No. 12 (1969); Charles Murrah, "The Background of Mansfield Park", in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad: Essays Collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse, ed. Robert C.Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), and Tony Tanner's essay, already cited.

the netting boxes Tom has given her or the mare Edmund provides. Edmund's gold chain, as perfectly suited to her needs as the pencil and writing paper he provides for her first letter to William or the gentle mare he provides for her health, is of first value because of its associations, one in a series of kind and solicitous gestures reaching back to her childhood. Crawford enjoys considering the material advantages he can give to Fanny, and he tries to win her by making her feel his material powers. He provides William with a horse for hunting and has his sister give Fanny the necklace, sure that she will understand the real origin of the gift. But his necklace does not please Fanny in its ornateness - "of gold prettily worked" (MP 258) - nor does it prove of any use to her: it will not fit through the ring of the cross. Crawford's gift is, ironically, a reflection of his view of profession. His estate is no more than an ornament, a source of wealth to provide him with means of gratifying his own wishes, to allow purchasing whatever he desires. His view of profession and his use of his wealth are incompatible with the professional and private values signified by the cross, but Edmund's "plain gold chain, perfectly simple and neat" (MP 262) is perfectly compatible with, in fact an integral part of, the values held by Fanny and William and signified by the amber cross.

From an identification of public values with private, and private with romantic, it is then a simple progression to the association of domestic and professional values. Romantic and professional values are united in the marriage of Fanny and Edmund as a system of values encompassing both domestic and professional life. The idea of the woman's sharing in her husband's profession is made first in Edmund's contemplation of his ordination: "On the 23d he was going to a friend near Peterborough in the same

situation as himself, and they were to receive ordination in the course of Christmas week. Half his destiny would then be determined - but the other half might not be so very smoothly wooed. His duties would be established, but the wife who was to share, and animate, and reward those duties might yet be unattainable" (MP 255). A crucial question in Mansfield Park concerns Mary Crawford's fitness to be the wife of a clergyman. If we fail to understand, as Edmund does, her importance to his properly fulfilling his professional duties, his hesitance in proposing to her, his pain in her attacks on the clergy, seem no more than egoistic defensiveness. But Edmund seeks a wife who will share those duties, and he finds such a woman in Fanny Price. Professionalduties sustain but do not animate, and we see in Fanny and Anne Elliot, the two heroines, who in loveless situations sustain themselves by performing familial, domestic duties, that those duties must be animated by love, though they are sustained by gratitude or principle.

The wife's share in profession is made more explicit in Persuasion. Admiral and Mrs. Croft have been called the only happily married couple in Jane Austen's novels, and the foundation of their happiness is a firm mutual respect and equality. Anne Elliot takes particular pleasure in observing them together: "[The Crofts] brought with them their country habit of being almost always together. He was ordered to walk, to keep off the gout, and Mrs. Croft seemed to go shares with him in every thing, and to walk for her life, to do him good.... [Anne] always watched them as long as she could; delighted to fancy she understood what they might be talking of, as they walked along in happy independence, or equally delighted to see the Admiral's hearty shake of the hand when he encountered an old friend, and observe their eagerness of conversation when occasionally forming into a little

knot of the navy, Mrs. Croft looking as intelligent and keen as any of the officers around her" (P 168). The harmony between them marked by their sharing equally in an interest in his profession looks ahead to the promise of the same harmony between Wentworth and Anne. The last sentence of the novel makes explicit the connection of professional and domestic values: "[Anne] gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance" (P 252). Jane Austen without apology speaks of Anne as "belonging to", not "being connected with", Wentworth's profession. The domestic virtues are not simply those that Wentworth brings to his marriage from his profession, but those which Anne Elliot brings to her share in naval life, as well as to her marriage.

Chapter IV: From Prudence to Romance:

The Widening View of Nature

In his review of the Sanditon fragment E.M. Forster remarks what seemed to him a radical departure for Jane Austen, a striking new element in her fiction:

> Sanditon gives out an atmosphere, and also exists as a geographic and economic force. It was clearly intended to influence the faded fabric of the story and govern its matrimonial weavings. Of course, Miss Austen would not have stressed this, and her book, even if conceived with vigour, would not have marked a turning-point in the English novel or overshadowed Waverley. The change is merely interesting because it took place in her mind - that self-contained mind which had hitherto regarded the face of the earth as a site for shrubberies and strawberry beds, and had denied it features of its own. Perhaps here, too, we can trace the influence of ill-health: the invalid looks out of her window, weary of her invaluable Cassandra, weary of civility and auntish fun, and finds an unexpected repose in the expanses of Nature.[1]

Forster's initial comment draws our attention to something worth careful notice, but his further observations are somewhat jarring. Long before her last illness Jane Austen was aware, as her novels make clear, of the repose to be found in the contemplation of nature. Fanny Price finds respite from her troubles when she gazes out the window and says to Edmund: "'Here's harmony!... Here's repose!...Here's what may tranquillize every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene'" (MP 113). Emma Woodhouse also seeks repose and consolation in

[1] E.M. Forster, "Sanditon", in Abinger Harvest (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1936), p.151.

nature when everything in her life seems to have gone awry: "Never had the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm and brilliant after a storm, been more attractive to her" (E 424).

Ironically, though, the view of nature in Sanditon suggests the uncontrollable and destructive powers of nature, as well as the power to bring repose and consolation. The dominant characteristic of the town of Sanditon is its exposure, its openness to the powers of nature, its physical precariousness, which seems to reflect the economic uncertainties of Mr. Palmer's scheme of speculation. Mr. Palmer describes his former home as having been "'built in a hole,'" (MW 380),[2] but Mrs. Palmer wistfully reminds him that its new tenants felt none of the storms the previous winter, whereas they, in their new house "about an hundred yards from the brow of a steep, but not very lofty Cliff" (MW 384) overlooking the sea, "'had been literally rocked in [their] bed...'" (MW 381). If Jane Austen's last illness exerted influence over her view of nature, it seems that her consciousness of the indomitable powers of nature before which men are helpless was confirmed and increased. But most importantly, Jane Austen's novels show that her view of nature in Sanditon does not mark a radical departure for her but is a natural development in her conception of nature.

Jane Austen seems to have intended using the conjunction of the weather and the seaside location of Sanditon as a force

[2]Sotherton is said to stand "on one of the lowest spots of the park; in that respect, unfavourable for improvement" (MP 56), but Emma notes the appropriateness of the situation of the house at Donwell: "She felt all the honest pride and complacency which her alliance with the present and future proprietor could fairly warrant, as its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered..." (E 358)

shaping the action of the novel. Conjectures as to the precise use she might have made of these dangers is fruitless. Jane Austen had used the weather and the sea in earlier novels to convey not only the uncontrollable but the malevolent forces of nature. Sir Thomas Bertram, William Price, Jane Fairfax, Captain Wentworth and the Crofts are all subject to the dangerous caprice of nature when weather and sea conjoin. But Jane Austen does little more than allude to their peril, allow their dangers to hover in the background of the action. She does not, as it were, go to sea with these characters. Sanditon is unique, because she seems to intend bringing the dangers of nature to the fore; she goes with her characters to Sanditon. If the fragment is a proper indication of her intention, she planned to show, not simply imply or report, the dangers of nature external to man, and to explore the point where the faults of human nature intersect with these dangers.

The descriptions of the weather at Sanditon seem destined for a very different use than those of the weather at, for example, Sotherton. The storms at Sanditon are manifestations of the forces of nature external to man, but the heat of the day at Sotherton seems strangely dependent upon the characters, is no more than a reflection of the natures of the characters themselves. We see then two distinct uses of nature: images functioning as a metaphor for the internal forces of human nature over which man can exert considerable control by the exercise of right reason and good feeling; and images functioning as a metaphor for the external forces of time, chance and accident, over which man exerts little or no control. The first metaphor tends to reduce nature to a mirror, dependent upon man for its movement and meaning; the second views nature

as an entity unto itself, similar to man but with power independent of man.

The limitations of Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, and even Mansfield Park are to a certain extent those of the novelist as rationalist and moralist. Jane Austen refused to be overwhelmed by the haphazard, irrational forces of nature; she sought all the protection possible from those powers, not by denying them but by examining the forms which limit them. As a rationalist she was slow to risk her characters in a world of capricious chance and accident; she made human nature the centre of her focus and explored man's ability to control and direct his own destiny through an attention to moral law. But with Emma and Persuasion capricious, uncontrollable nature is no longer just implicitly present but held in check for the purpose of allowing us to examine man's power over himself. The irrational forces of nature now provide an explicit context for the rational and the moral, affirming the mysterious movements of life beyond man's rational comprehension and control. This is not to say that these two novels, this expanded vision, negate the truth contained in the earlier works. On the contrary, Emma and Persuasion confirm that those earlier vessels (if I may return to Admiral Croft's example) can indeed withstand the forces of external nature as they were meant. But one finds in the later novels a new quality, a new effect, which gives them unique status not only among Jane Austen's works but also among other novels, as John Bayley points out: "It seems to me that the harmony established in both Emma and Persuasion between a deep and serious acknowledgment of the unrecorded, unremitted sadness of things, and the never impossible peripeteia of joy and surprise, gives them a unique

status as fictional masterpieces."[3] This new quality seems in part at least the result of Jane Austen's acknowledging a wider conception of nature than she had before.

Mansfield Park reflects fully and explicitly for the first time in Jane Austen a world outside human nature, but the principal limitation of the world reflected here is that it corresponds precisely to human nature. The rigidity which has annoyed so many readers is surely in part the result of Jane Austen's most careful insistence on the laws of cause and effect. She takes her rationalist view of nature and human nature to the fartherest limits, sees the finest intermeshing possible between personal responsibility and personal happiness. Chance has almost no function in the novel. From the marriages of the Miss Wards in the first paragraph the action follows a course that is rational, logical and in the given context, natural. No change, no disaster is a matter of pure chance; chance presents choice, and reason or duty or passion chooses.[4] The death of Dr. Grant is not a matter of chance but of his having chosen (obviously without understanding what he was about) to over-indulge for

[3]Bayley, "The 'Irresponsibility' of Jane Austen", p.18.

[4]I am not here using the definition of chance suggested by Joel Weinsheimer, "Chance and the Hierarchy of Marriage in Pride and Prejudice", ELH, 39 (1972): "As a working definition, we may suggest that all effects not voluntarily produced be considered, morally speaking, as the results of chance", p.405. According to this definition, Mansfield Park is virtually governed by chance. Closer to Jane Austen's view, I think, would be a definition of chance as a circumstance which imposes itself without allowing choice, or a circumstance which denies or allows fulfilment of a choice previously determined.

too long his fondness for rich food. Tom Bertram's fever is not a capricious visitation of nature but arises from his fall, which occurs because of his over-indulgence in drink. This is the law of a world we glimpsed in Marianne Dashwood's inducing her own illness in Sense and Sensibility. All can be traced back to some failure to control human nature and hence nature. Edmund and Fanny end happily because they have controlled their own natures and have thereby protected themselves from the destructive powers of nature.

What vexes most about this vision is that it seems to imply not just that a kind of happiness, personal comfort, contentment, and peace of mind, result from self-control, from right conduct, but that the external trappings of a happy home, love and material comfort follow inexorably. The novel lacks all sense of how easily and inexplicably external nature can sweep away every comfort, material and emotional, leaving man bereft through no fault of his own. In Emma Jane Austen shows the happiness that can come through no merit of one's own, and in Persuasion the unhappiness born of no fault of one's own: we discover at last the recognition of strange and inexplicable workings of nature beyond reason, beyond the cause and effect of moral law.

The idea that chance brings only choice and that through the exercise of good judgment one can secure one's happiness, can protect oneself from the destructive forces of nature, and free oneself from a dependence upon chance, gives way in Emma to an acknowledgment that chance not only brings forward opportunities for happiness but can virtually impose that happiness, mysteriously and unmerited, upon us.[5] Emma calls Frank Churchill

[5] D.L. Minter, "Aesthetic Vision and the World of Emma", NCF, 21 (1966) argues that Emma tries to impose her own design, her own form upon her world but finds it intractable. That world, he maintains, finally disciplines Emma "with a gentle hand", p.59.

"the child of good fortune" (E 448) - a name she might have applied as accurately to herself. Jane Austen makes it clear that Frank Churchill is foolish and wrong to look "'to time, chance, circumstance, slow effects, sudden bursts, perseverance and weariness, health and sickness'" (E 437) to bring about his marriage to Jane Fairfax. Yet he does, and all these things operate to bring about the union. Emma, who has unconsciously, even unwittingly, placed her dependence upon these things to achieve her happiness, finally acknowledges the great irrational force that exerts such power over human destiny: "'Was it new for any thing in this world to be unequal, inconsistent, incongruous - or for chance and circumstance (as second causes) to direct the human fate?'" (E 413). This is very different indeed from the strict causality operating in Mansfield Park, from that tightly controlled world in which everything is too equal, too consistent, too congruous.

In Emma weather and the sea function as images of chance and of the ineluctable powers of growth and change that so affect human life. Emma's narrow, rigid little world is presided over by her father, who seeks to deny the very power of nature. He abhors chance and change, tries to keep all fixed and static; his fears are reflected in his obsession with the dangers of the weather and the sea. He has tried to establish Emma in the closure of their world, but such a design is impossible to maintain. The progress of Emma's being influenced by forces beyond her control or that of her father is charted in the changes in the weather. The confinements and restrictions of a damp, chilly autumn at the beginning of the novel indicate Emma's situation. The advent of snow at the end of Volume I seems to establish her in frightening isolation, fixity and closure: "The ground was covered with snow, and the atmosphere

in that unsettled state between frost and thaw, which is of all others the most unfriendly for exercise, every morning beginning in rain or snow, and every evening setting in to freeze, [Emma] was for many days a most honourable prisoner" (E 138). But the isolation and immobility imaged by winter is followed by the flux of spring, by movement, change and growth. The events of Box Hill, the revelation of Frank's engagement to Jane and of Harriet's attachment to Mr. Knightley, are followed by atmospheric perturbations that reflect Emma's state of mind: "The weather added what it could of gloom. A cold stormy rain set in, and nothing of July appeared but in the trees and shrubs, which the wind was despoiling, and the length of the day, which only made such cruel sights the longer visible" (E 421). But the storms pass and summer returns, anticipating Mr. Knightley's proposal: "The weather continued much the same all the following morning; and the same loneliness, and the same melancholy, seemed to reign at Hartfield - but in the afternoon it cleared; the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again" (E 424). We discover here a very fine shift from Mansfield Park: Nature does not reflect human nature; human nature, the movement of human life, reflects nature, the movement of nature.[6] We are in a world of the unexpected, of the surprising.

In contrast to the unseasonable, surprising, unexpected weather near the end of Emma, the season - the state of the trees rather than the weather - is precisely what it should be

[6] Cf. Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., "Emma: Character and Construction", PMLA, 71 (1956), pp. 647-8; Frank Bradbrook, Jane Austen: 'Emma', (Studies in English Literature, 3), (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), p.57; and Barbara Hardy, A Reading of Jane Austen, p.56.

at the end of Mansfield Park: "It was three months, full three months, since [Fanny's] quitting [Mansfield]; and the change was from winter to summer. Her eye fell every where on lawns and plantations of the freshest green; and the trees, though not fully clothed, were in that delightful state, when farther beauty is known to be at hand, and when, while much is actually given to the sight, more yet remains for the imagination" (MP 446-447). Nature is here indistinguishable from Fanny: it moves as she moves in orderly progress forward, full of the same promise as her own circumstances. Fanny's conduct seems very nearly the cause of the coming of spring. Although the storm and darkness reflect Emma's state of mind, the restoration of summer is an independent movement of nature, just as Mr.Knightley's proposal is independent of Emma's past matrimonial machinations, is in no way determined by her past conduct. Fanny has attended nature, followed nature, is in full harmony with nature; whereas Emma is caught up in the mysterious, inexplicable workings of nature, of powers she does not comprehend, is hardly even aware of.

The arrival of the Crawfords at Mansfield Park brings out the destructive forces of nature in that world, sets into motion that chain of causes that leads to the misery of Henry, Maria and Mary.[7] Only Fanny recognizes and tries to combat those destructive tendencies. The forces of change, haphazard and uncertain, introduced by the Westons' marriage and the arrival of Frank Churchill, Jane Fairfax, and Augusta Elton, give rise

[7] Cf. Joel C. Weinsheimer, "Mansfield Park: Three Problems", NCF, 29 1974: "The Crawfords are not some extrinsic evil that ascends from London to violate the children of Mansfield...the presence of Mary and Henry serves only as a catalyst to release the worst already existing within the Bertrams", p.203.

not to a great, conscious struggle such as Fanny's, but to comic confusion from which unhappiness seems to have every possibility of emerging. The Woodhousian world is, according to its own terms, radically changed by the removal of the governess to a house one mile away, by the arrival of a young man who leaves doors open and speaks of insidious designs for throwing open windows behind their sashes, by the rage of a foolish, affected woman for exploring parties. The characters themselves are the agents of nature, of chance and change, without quite realizing it.

Significantly, all outside the native Highbury circle are in some way associated with water: Mr. Elton meets his wife in Bath; Frank and Jane come from Weymouth where she has nearly been swept overboard while boating; the John Knightleys have been to South End for their childrens' health. The narrowness of Emma's world is marked by her never having seen the sea: "'I must beg you not to talk of the sea. It makes me envious and miserable; - I who have never seen it!'" (E 101). Since Emma cannot go to the sea, the various forces associated with water, the sea - accidents, romance, sickness, health, adventure, uncertainty - are brought to Highbury. The irrational movements of external nature flow into Emma's tranquil and seemingly static world. The final sign that she has been properly initiated, has earned the right to see for the first time the image in nature of these forces, is Mr. Knightley's taking her for "a tour to the sea-side" after their wedding. Mr. Woodhouse cannot finally protect Emma from the forces of nature, remove her as it were from their sphere of influence; his obsession with the dangers of nature has rendered them so absurd that Emma is completely unprepared for a confrontation with these forces. That Emma arrives at happiness without having had the advantages of

sensible protection or preparation completes the vision that is the other side of the coin from Mansfield Park. What prevails is not a prudent attention by which nature is controlled, but nature itself.

In Persuasion one finds nature again prevailing, but the workings of nature are examined more closely, more specifically:

> The sweet scenes of autumn were for a while put by - unless some tender sonnet, fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining happiness, and the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone together, blessed her memory. She roused herself to say, as they struck by order into another path, "Is not this one of the ways to Winthrop?" But nobody heard, or, at least, nobody answered her.
>
> Winthrop, however, or its environs - for young men are, sometimes, to be met with, strolling about near home, was their destination; and after another half mile of gradual ascent through large enclosures, where the ploughs at work, and the fresh-made path spoke the farmer, counteracting the sweets of poetical despondence, and meaning to have spring again, they gained the summit of the most considerable hill, which parted Uppercross and Winthrop... (P 85).

Although much emphasis has been given to the poetic descriptions of the autumn landscape in Persuasion, a careful examination of this passage reveals that Jane Austen is juxtaposing two ways of looking at nature: the static view, in which nature embodies a particular state of mind; and the dynamic view, in which nature reflects the unceasing movement and change in life.[8] Anne Elliot holds the former view in this passage, and her penchant for referring to poetry in her autumnal mood indicates Jane Austen's belief that this view had gained predominance in art. But the complete reality of the scene, in which the ploughs at work and the fresh-made paths cannot be denied, hints the limitation of this view and Jane Austen's intention

[8] Cf. Barbara Hardy, pp.57-8.

to encompass the dynamic as well as the static in her work. However sweet are the sweets of poetic despondence induced by a contemplation of autumn, autumn can no more function as a complete metaphor for nature than can spring.

Jane Austen does not leave the metaphor at a suggestion of the promise of spring present in the autumn landscape. She includes the active part man must play in connecting present and future. The hand of the farmer is not marked solely to draw attention to some particular aspect or attribute of nature. The farmers, acting with a knowledge of and trust in dynamic nature, exert themselves in autumn in order to reap the fruits spring will make possible. This is analogous to the unacknowledged purpose of the Uppercross party's walk, which is quite contrary to Anne's meditation upon the decline of the year and happiness, youth and hope.[9] Henrietta Musgrove guides the party towards Winthrop, where Charles Hayter lives. She, like the farmers, exerts herself in the hope and trust of renewal, one necessary because of her neglect of Hayter during her momentary fascination with Wentworth.

Anne Elliot's awareness, but lack of certainty, of their destination, parallels her own gradually increasing understanding that her view of static nature must be placed within its proper dynamic context. Henrietta's action foreshadows Anne's exertion, oblique though it is, when she, knowing Wentworth can hear her, speaks openly to Harville of the endurance of woman's love. Her act dovetails with her previous exertion - the refusal of Charles Musgrove that leaves her free for a renewal of Wentworth's attentions, and her kindness to

[9] Cf. Litz's analysis of the walk scene, pp.152-3.

Mrs. Smith that opens to her the truth about William Elliot's character. Anne thus prepares in her own quiet, unobtrusive way for the second spring of her love - a spring far less inevitable or probable than that which the farmers or Henrietta anticipate, but requiring the same exertion.

The emphasis upon exertion implies that Jane Austen has by no means abdicated her belief in the efficacy of attending certain laws of cause and effect, and the personal responsibility these laws impose. Sir Walter Elliot loses his estate, not through mysterious operations of fate but through his own stupid self-indulgence and neglect of duty: spendthrift baronets who habitually live beyond their means ought to expect to be dispossessed sooner or later. Mrs. Smith's impecunity is, on a smaller scale, equally the effect of living carelessly and selfishly, with regard for nothing beyond one's own immediate pleasure. In Mansfield Park this sense of cause and effect is balanced by an insistence on the beneficial effects produced by self-denial, humility and attention to duty, but in Persuasion this equal and opposite effect is denied by the example of Anne Elliot. The laws of cause and effect are not perfectly balanced in bringing reward and retribution. Anne's conduct has been selfless, morally above reproach, but her self-denial, her prudence, and her adherence to the dictates of conscience have not secured her happiness. Her rejection of Wentworth causes her enduring sadness, an abiding sense of loss.

Persuasion affirms that chance can accomplish ends that do not result from a rigorously controlled set of causal actions. The exertions of Anne and Wentworth may be seen as causes that lead to their marriage, but these actions have power only within the framework of opportunities provided by chance: the Croft's

letting Kellynch, Louisa's accident, Wentworth's overhearing the conversation between Harville and Anne. Wentworth and Anne do not plan or implement a design to come together; opportunities arise by chance and are acted upon. The darker side of chance is, though, simultaneously presented. Although Louisa's accident teaches Wentworth the evil of a wilful mind, he discovers that he is considered engaged to her and that his own part in her accident confers on him a serious responsibility. Later he hesitates to declare his love to Anne, because all he sees and hears of William Elliot's attentions to her indicate that she intends to marry her cousin. Even though chance here works ultimately in favour of Anne and Wentworth, Jane Austen forestalls any idea that chance metes out rewards any more justly than does the operation of cause and effect. In contrast to the illnesses of Tom Bertram and Marianne Dashwood, the bad health of Mrs. Smith and Captain Harville is in no way associated with moral fault. The suffering for which Mrs. Smith does bear certain responsibility (her impecunity) is compounded by the chance visitation of illness. Any temptation to associate her illness with her past conduct is prevented by the presence of Captain Harville, whose wound and consequent debilitation and financial reverses are the result of his heroic performance of his professional duties.[10]

Accident reveals the interplay of chance with cause and effect. Although we see that the liveliness of the child

[10] This seems to me to disprove P.N. Zeitlow, "Luck and Fortuitous Circumstance in Persuasion: Two Interpretations", ELH, 32 (1965), who argues that the novel affirms Providence, the idea that the nature of things is structured to serve out to each individual the rewards and punishments that are his due.

Charles Musgrove can lead to a dislocated collarbone, the insistence of Louisa Musgrove upon her own little delights to a cracked skull, and the reckless driving of the Crofts to frequent upsets of their gig, none of these things is so inevitable as the financial ruin of Sir Walter or Mrs. Smith. The haphazardness of the accidents connects them just as closely with the chance that brings Harville's wound and Mrs. Smith's illness. Jane Austen thus conveys a powerful sense of man's inability to control completely his earthly destiny. Chance, accident, cause and effect operate in the world according to no consistent or wholly discernable pattern.

The workings of these powers of nature have the combined effect of stressing not only the lack of control one has over his fate, but the very uncertainty of life itself. Death and the possibility of death brood over the entire novel. The Elliots wear mourning for William Elliot's wife; Mrs. Musgrove still grieves the loss of her son Dick; Fanny Harville's recent death is a palpable part of the atmosphere in Lyme. Not only is the possibility of death brought forward with Louisa's accident on the Cobb, but Mrs. Smith's illness, Harville's wound, Wentworth's account of his dangers at sea, all contribute to the sense of the omnipresence of death.

The theme of love in Persuasion is closely associated with the themes of loss and death. Love dictates or in some way colours one's response to the deaths of Mrs. William Elliot, Fanny Harville, and Dick Musgrove. Mrs. Elliot had the bad luck to fall in love with an unprincipled man who had no affection for her, no interest in anything but her money. Consequently, her death appears a deliverance from conjugal misery. In contrast, Fanny Harville, who was about to make a marriage to a

man she loved and was loved by, appears to have been snatched from every possibility of happiness, making her untimely death both romantic and tragic. The death of Dick Musgrove evokes two very different responses. The narrator tells us the reality of Dick's life, which makes his death a rather convenient occurrence: "The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year..." (P 50). Yet his mother's love, real or imagined, transforms him in death to a man who promised every good; she grieves her loss. But Jane Austen principally explores the way in which love determines one's response to the qualities of life that herald death: time, decay and change - the transitory nature of the material world.

Self-love gives rise to a fear of decay and change, and can cut one off from a sense of the continually renewed possibilities of life brought by the cyclic movement of nature. Sir Walter Elliot, consumed with self-love, is concerned only with staying the hand of time, with maintaining his handsome face. His eldest daughter's beauty, yet untouched by the sadness or anxiety that have robbed Anne of her bloom, or by the childbirth and domestic chaos that have taken Mary's, seems to support his illusions about his own state of preservation. Sir Walter makes one of those absurd leaps of logic elicited by self-love when he assumes that because Elizabeth is as blooming as ever at twenty-nine, he himself must be at fifty-four! Ironically, though, Sir Walter stands as a reminder that even Elizabeth must eventually suffer the ravages of time. Elizabeth's coldness and lack of affection for anyone but herself have preserved her beauty for the moment, but have also established her in a fixity

that denies the benefits of change and time in conjunction with unselfish love. Self-love has imposed a terrible sameness on the cycles of her life: "Thirteen winters' revolving frosts had seen her opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighbourhood afforded; and thirteen springs shewn their blossoms, as she travelled up to London with her father, for a few weeks annual enjoyment of the great world" (P 7). Although the family's removal to Bath marks the end of this routine in her life, one never doubts that her own egoistic nature will leave her trammelled by self-love, cut off from any vitalizing connection with the world; she partakes only of that which she wishes to deny - physical decay and death.

Ironically, physical decay is a mark of the other characters' engagement with life, of the risks of death that self-denying love prompts them to take.[11] Anne Elliot's loss of bloom comes from the suffering born of her continuing to love Wentworth even after she has given up all hope for the fulfilment of that love. Harville's want of health, resulting from his exertions to provide for the wife and children he loves, makes him look older than his years. Mrs. Croft willingly risks death and exchanges whatever beauty she had for the reddened and weather-beaten complexion brought about by life at sea, rather than be separated from her husband. Mary Musgrove provides a comic parallel, for she partakes the fullness of life, takes risks and bears its marks, but with about the same degree of consciousness as her

[11] Joseph M.Duffy, Jr., "Structure and Idea in Persuasion", NCF, 8 (1954), notes: "One of the principal points of the novel is that participation in life wastes the individual," p.279.

drawing-room furniture has of its engagement with life: "She was now lying on the faded sofa of the pretty little drawing-room, the once elegant furniture of which had been gradually growing shabby, under the influence of four summers and two children..." (P 37). The marks brought by love - through suffering hopeless love, through childbirth, through dangers of the weather and battle at sea - are all seen as affirmations of a spiritual vitality, a life-enhancing connection with nature.

Risk and prudence, then, have no fixed, static value, but are given meaning, value by their connection with love.[12] Louisa Musgrove's impetuous risk on the Cobb is foolish because it is connected not with self-sacrificing risk prompted by love, but with self-gratifying risk prompted by self-love. Anne's prudence in refusing Wentworth during their first acquaintance is connected not with her love of self but with her love for him: "But it was not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end to [the engagement]. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than her own, she could hardly have given him up. - The belief of being prudent, and self-denying principally for his advantage, was her chief consolation..." (P27-8). As a balancing counterpoint, Anne Elliot refuses Charles Musgrove's proposal, because though here there is no material (financial) risk involved, there is emotional risk - that evil of marrying without love, which prompts Fanny Price's refusal of Crawford. Anne's prudence arises properly from love and lack of love, but never from self-love. When she

[12] Duffy finds Anne Elliot's defence of her having yielded to persuasion on the side of safety, not risk, paradoxical, because he equates safety with rejection of life and risk with affirmation of life. A closer look at the novel reveals that the associations are not so rigid.

accepts Wentworth she is properly guided by love - affection now informed by that "natural sequel of an unnatural beginning" (P 30), romance, which glorifies the risk and accepts the uncertainties and dangers taken in the name of altruistic love.

Only this altruistic love exists outside the power of time, change and decay; only such love betokens the immutable in a world of mutability. At the beginning of Persuasion Anne Elliot's focus is upon the sense of what is lost and never to be regained. But her own feelings, her abiding love for Wentworth even when possession of the material object of her love seems impossible, deny the rational view she takes:

> What might not eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations, removals, - all, all must be comprised in it; and oblivion of the past - how natural, how certain too! It included nearly a third part of her own life.
> Alas! with all her reasonings, she found, that to retentive feelings eight years may be little more than nothing (P 60).

Anne begins to understand the immutability of such love before she understands the possibility of its material fulfilment through the workings of cyclic nature. Conjugal love is, then, a gift of nature to Anne Elliot.

But Mrs. Smith receives an analogous gift in a more protean form:

> A submissive spirit might be patient, a strong understanding would supply resolution, but here was something more; here was that elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself, which was from Nature alone. It was the choicest gift of Heaven; and Anne viewed her friend as one of those instances in which, by a merciful appointment, it seems designed to counter-balance almost every other want (P 154).

Mrs. Smith perceives something beyond the transitory world which takes her out of herself and makes possible for her a

just contemplation of the material world. By identifying Nature with God in this passage, Jane Austen implies the divine analogue of earthly love. Here she drops casually but distinctly that veil which Gilbert Ryle suggests Jane Austen draws between her art and her religion.[13] Persuasion affirms Jane Austen's belief that something lies behind that veil. Mrs. Smith is essential to the novel, for through her character Jane Austen transcends the metaphorical. We may easily identify the fulfilment of romantic love with the satisfaction of divine love. And if we do not share Jane Austen's confidence in the existence of divine love, we can be satisfied with her understanding of the value of romantic love. But Mrs. Smith's life does not provide such satisfaction, such consolation. In her life we do not find the love that binds up the marriage of the Crofts, or the family life of the Harvilles and the Musgroves. Jane Austen does not name that which gives Mrs. Smith her tranquil centre, only implies that the centre is not the self. But certainly the suggestion remains that that which is the source of Mrs. Smith's gift is the object of her love.

When we compare the vision of nature in Persuasion and even Emma with that found in the other novels, we perceive a distinct change. But the change is not a contradiction; it is an expansion. Jane Austen's earlier examination of nature encompassed only physical nature - that is, man and material world - which is subject to the laws of nature. These are the laws which are

[13] "I am not suggesting that Jane Austen's girls are atheists, agnostics or Deists. I am only saying that when Jane Austen writes about them, she draws the curtain between her Sunday thoughts, whatever they were, and her creative imagination", p.117

called into use in improving and amending the material world, as we have already seen in Chapter I. When Jane Austen equates God and Nature in Persuasion, she is quite obviously not equating God and material nature, which would carry the absurd implication that to improve and amend nature would be to improve and amend God. The nature to which Jane Austen refers in Persuasion evidently signifies non-material forces which act on the material world: chance and accident. Some confusion may of course arise, because she identifies these forces with material forms in nature, uses the seasons, the weather, and the sea as metaphors for these forces.

The rather strict utilitarian view, later found in John Stuart Mill, which Jane Austen explores in Mansfield Park, quite appropriately images cause and effect reflected by growth and cultivation, degeneration and dilapidation in material nature - the results of properly attending or carelessly neglecting the laws of nature. She attempts to apply these laws to human conduct, to morality, but, as I have already discussed, the analogy is ultimately too restrictive, too exclusive. In Persuasion the utilitarian element is tempered, the whole vision expanded to include the operation (rather than the laws) of the forces of nature beyond man's rational comprehension. The sea and the weather image these forces. Both must have appeared to Jane Austen in their scope and incomprehensibility images of all in life beyond man's control - accident and chance with their various manifestations ofthe ends they bring about such as illness and good-health, poverty and wealth, happiness and misery. These contraries unite in the ambivalent attitude Anne Elliot and Wentworth must have towards the sea after their marriage: it images both the miraculous fulfilment of their

love as well as the constant uncertainty and threat of loss which attend all human life. Anne moves forward, not as Fanny Price, protected by an alliance with beneficent nature, or as Emma Woodhouse, protected by Mr. Knightley from the threat of capricious nature. Anne Elliot moves forward with nature itself.

Conclusion: Possibilities

By considering Jane Austen's six novels in the light of her evolving views of nature and society, we can, I think, see some important differences among the novels. These differences are not simply those of shifts of emphasis or even of the expansion of the limits of her vision, though both are important signs of the differences. The changes in Jane Austen's novels which are brought about by an increase in her understanding of the complexity and ambiguity of real forms are nowhere more apparent than in the marriages which conclude each novel. What the marriage of the hero and heroine signifies reveals the limitations of Jane Austen's early vision and the way in which the limitations are both acknowledged and overcome in the later novels, particularly in Persuasion. The great change is from a vision centred upon the idea of marriage as resolving all tension and disharmony, as ending all the uncertainties of life, to an acceptance of the limitations of marriage itself. By acknowledging the uncertainties over which marriage has no power, no control, Jane Austen overcomes a major limitation of her art. As I discussed in my introduction, Jane Austen is a realistic artist, concerned with an accurate imaging of real forms. The tension she sees as existing both within and between these forms is a principal source of the uncertainties her novels posit as a dominant quality of life itself.

Human nature, social forms and social institutions all contain conflicting possibilities which give rise to the uncertainties that create much of the tension within Jane Austen's novels. The marriage of the hero and the heroine at the end of each novel resolves the tension, ends the uncertainties coming from these sources, and confirms the fulfilment of the best possibilities of the couple, both as individuals and as social

beings. The marriage equally signifies the couple's rejection of less desirable possibilities. The alternative matches that arise for the hero and heroine in the course of each novel are essential to the presentation of the various personal and social possibilities realized or rejected in the actual marriage. Jane Austen attempts to suggest uncertainty as to whom the heroine and hero will marry, thereby creating another source of tension in the plots of the novels.

But the rivalry for the affection of the hero and heroine does not always convey genuine uncertainty, real threats to the union of the hero and heroine. Lucy Steele is seen as an alternative to Elinor Dashwood, Wickham to Darcy, Miss Bingley to Elizabeth Bennet, Frank Churchill to Mr. Knightley, Harriet Smith or Jane Fairfax to Emma Woodhouse, Louisa Musgrove to Anne Elliot, and William Elliot to Captain Wentworth. But as marital possibilities all these alternatives fail to reach a status of probability that creates tension for the reader as well as for the characters. That is, Jane Austen often succeeds in realizing such anxieties as Elinor's about Lucy, Mr. Knightley's about Frank, Anne's about Louisa, Wentworth's about Mr. Elliot, even Emma's about Harriet Smith, but she does not succeed in making the reader believe in the power of these possibilities to threaten the felicitous union of the hero and heroine.

The failure to achieve this tension of course by no means destroys the effectiveness of the novels. In Sense and Sensibility whatever lack of tension comes from our never quite believing that Edward Ferrars will marry Lucy Steele rather than Elinor, is compensated by the tension arising from the uncertainties of Marianne's relationship with Willoughby. This tension is not the result of conflicting alternatives - Colonel Brandon never

reaches the point of being an active rival for Marianne's affection during the time when Willoughby's position is uncertain. Jane Austen's aim in the Marianne-Willoughby relationship seems to be to make the reader himself fully experience Willoughby's charm and attractiveness, an experience which is designed to show the dangers of judging too much by superficially pleasing qualities. The possibility of Elizabeth Bennet's choosing Wickham or of Darcy's choosing Miss Bingley is quite perfunctory, contributing almost nothing to the tension of the plot. The tension derives principally from the conflicts within Elizabeth and Darcy and between them, and from the threats to their reconciliation posed by the conduct of Mrs. Bennet and Lady Catherine.

The uncertainty posed by William Elliot is complicated by an element lacking in the other opposing pairs. One may never quite believe that Wentworth will marry Louisa or that Anne will marry her cousin, but Elliot's presence nevertheless poses a real threat: in the face of Elliot's courtship of Anne, Wentworth might withdraw in despair and depart on another eight year absence. We must return to Jane Austen's first novel to find a situation similar to this. John Thorpe is not the slightest threat to Catherine Morland's happiness - not, that is, in so far as there is a possibility of her choosing to marry him rather than Henry Tilney. Thorpe never reaches the status in her consciousness that Frank has in Emma's or even that Wickham has in Lizzy's. His danger is more subtle, and it is a danger the reader feels: Henry Tilney might quite conceivably, upon seeing Catherine pursued by Thorpe, withdraw and never bother taking the trouble to get to know her well enough to be attached to her. Ironically, Thorpe's lies to General Tilney lead to Catherine's

invitation to Northanger, where Henry does have an opportunity to become attached to Catherine. Jane Austen's having revised Northanger Abbey just before or during the composition of Persuasion suggests that the kind of threat posed by Thorpe might have led to her having William Elliot pose a similar threat.

One cannot object to Jane Austen's not providing her heroes and heroines with romantic rivals or to her providing them no alternative save that of simply not marrying each other. Yet Jane Austen sometimes invites criticism, because she quite obviously attempts to create uncertainties within the plot by setting up such rivals.[1] One of the merits of her work is that the novels contain enough tension from other sources to suggest a realistic complexity in each plot. Jane Austen's failure to achieve tension by realizing marital alternatives emphasizes the richness of the success when this tension is fully achieved in Mansfield Park.

Mansfield Park is different, strikingly different, in its realization of possibilities, in its creation of tension arising from genuine uncertainties. Such differences make it a disquieting and especially satisfying work. The marital possibilities Jane Austen suggests are not simply perfunctory statements of thematic or structural alternatives. They achieve an intensity

[1] Jane Austen records in letters to Cassandra their brother Henry's reactions as he read Mansfield Park. She first writes that he, "I think, foresees how it will all be" (L 376). A few days later she reports: "I beleive (sic) now he has changed his mind as to foreseeing the end; he said yesterday, at least, that he defied anybody to say whether H.C. would be reformed, or would forget Fanny in a fortnight" (L 381). That Jane Austen chose to relate these comments suggests that she wished to create uncertainty and that her brother's inability to predict the outcome was precisely what she intended.

lacking in those brought forward or implied in the other novels. The resolution of Mansfield Park contains a tension formed by the juxtaposition of unachieved possibilities to realized possibilities. Jane Austen's wish to write a novel that combined light and shade provides an instructive metaphor here. From Fanny's point of view the unachieved possibilities are shade and the actualities light; but from Mary Crawford's point of view the actualities are shade, the unrealized possibilities light. Although we still have here a dissociation of the heroine from possibilities that might now easily and plausibly have been realized, Fanny differs from earlier heroines in that Jane Austen has provided a very specific alternative future for Fanny. Catherine Morland, Marianne and Elinor Dashwood, and Elizabeth Bennet have no vision, no deep sense of the possibility, of a future without love. At worst they perceive the possibility of a future without the particular man to whom they are attached. In Marianne's case, of course, the future without Willoughby, which seems so desolate at one point, is implied to be better than a future with him. Fanny understands the possibility of the specific future she might have had, a vision that makes her value all the more the happiness she achieves.

The resolution of Mansfield Park has been the object of a great deal of adverse criticism, which holds that Jane Austen cheats both her characters and her readers at the end of the novel.[2] Whatever the limitations of the resolution, Jane Austen does not wrench the progress of the novel from its logical course: she maintains throughout the novel two equally

[2]See for example, John Bayley, "The 'Irresponsibility' of Jane Austen", p.18; Joseph W. Donohue, p.177; and Joseph Duffy, p.71.

logical, even probable, sets of possibilities. The aggregate of the characters' past actions, past habits, and perception of destructive elements in certain behaviour, determine the conclusion that is finally realized. Jane Austen does not deny her characters the possibility of turning out well; she conveys both the uncertainty of what they do and the certainty of what they might have done. The reader's sense of the reality of all the possibilities - rational and emotional - gives the novel its greatest depth and most terrible beauty: the sense of achievement is accompanied by an acute sense of loss.

Jane Austen did not in the course of composition of Mansfield Park grow to like the Crawfords and then in a fit of conventional morality reject them.[3] She liked them, values and acknowledges the qualities in them that give rise to the possibility of their overcoming their limitations, of reforming their habits, of revising their values. She succeeds, as she intended,

[3]Probably the best known statement of this view is that of Lord David Cecil: "In Mansfield Park she sacrifices form to fact. The original design of the book obviously intended Henry Crawford to fill the role of villain. But as she works Jane Austen's creative power gets out of control, Henry Crawford comes to life as a sympathetic character; and under the pressure of his personality the plot takes a turn, of which the only logical conclusion is his marriage with the heroine, Fanny. Jane Austen was not one to be put upon by her creatures in this way. In the last three chapters she violently wrenches the story back into its original course: but only at the cost of making Henry act in a manner wholly inconsistent with the rest of his character." Norman Henfrey also finds fault in the treatment of the Crawfords: "If only the moralist could have confronted the Crawfords as fearlessly as did the artist instead of bending them to an edifying purpose" p.11. Lloyd W. Brown, "The Comic Conclusion in Jane Austen's Novels", PMLA, 84 (1969), 1582-7, disputes the claim that the ending is illogical, but he too misses the richness of the ending, maintaining that "to demand the alternate conclusion, as some critics have in effect done, is to require the abandonment of the logical development of character and situation that is such an integral and constant element in Jane Austen's comic conclusions" p.1586.

in making us like the Crawfords and in making us sense their best possibilities. She succeeds for precisely the reason she is said to fail: their failures are probable, logical, yet not wholly inevitable. We care deeply for the Crawfords, and we cannot give them up without feeling the terrible loss. If we did not feel the Crawford's end as a loss, if we did not understand the real possibility of a happier end for them, the novel would resolve simply into black and white. No other novel of Jane Austen's has a character whose fate we regret so deeply as we regret that of Mary and Henry Crawford. Isabella and John Thorpe, Willoughby, Lydia and Wickham, Charlotte Lucas, all possess good qualities which they neglect or abuse. But we feel no more than a passing regret for the something less than the perfect felicity that we know to be their lot. Jane Austen does evoke a deeper regret in the marriage of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax, but our sense of regret is minimized by the juxtaposition of their marriage to the splendid match of Emma and Mr. Knightley. The marriage of Edmund and Fanny, however, provides the most effective contrast to the fate of the Crawfords, because it is not so dazzling that we are apt to overlook the Crawfords when confronted with the soft light of the happiness of Fanny and Edmund. Whatever the possibilities of the Crawfords, had Jane Austen juxtaposed their failure to a marriage as brilliant as that of Darcy and Lizzy or of Emma and Mr. Knightley, the significance of their failures would be less deeply felt, the power of their loss to move us considerably diminished.

The joy and sadness at the conclusion of <u>Mansfield Park</u> are nonetheless dissociated from one another. Only the <u>past</u> possibility of one, and the <u>present</u> reality of the other are conjoined.

Jane Austen moves towards a more satisfactory and, I think, more realistic union of joy and sadness in the marriage of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax. In their marriage these qualities are mixed; both joy and sadness are a part of their present; sadness is not left behind, unpleasant possibilities are not purged. We glimpse here the abiding imperfection of earthly life. The effect is accomplished, however, with more economy and more power in the marriage of Anne Elliot and Captain Wentworth.

Jane Austen moves gradually from the sense of closure, of fixity, of completion, from the resolution of all uncertainties, towards a conclusion that both affirms the couple's best personal and social possibilities and also explicitly encompasses the abiding uncertainties of life which exist independently of the protective powers of a good marriage. Whereas the endings of the other novels are, for the most part, fixed and closed, the ending of Persuasion is open. Uncertainty remains a distinct part of the marriage of Anne and Wentworth. The marriage of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax foreshadows this openness, but the uncertainties of their marriage arise from the faults in Frank's character. That is, although the marriage is not exactly a bad match, it is flawed by the imperfection of Frank's character, not by anything external to the marriage itself. The uncertainties of the marriage of Persuasion come not as a result of any faults of the couple, but are simply a condition of life.

All the heroines save Anne Elliot are rewarded, secure and fixed at the conclusion of the novels. Catherine Morland moves from one pleasant existence to another; Marianne Dashwood is wiser but happier, Elinor content and satisfied; Elizabeth

Bennet is removed from the irritations of Longbourne and established in wealth and comfort at Pemberley; Fanny Price is settled in comfort and security at Mansfield parsonage; and Emma takes her place as Mrs. Knightley with every prospect of being established at Donwell Abbey. Although the source of happiness is conjugal love, the attendant security is imaged by place, the definite geographical fixity of the heroines. These young women have beginnings as similar as their endings. We encounter them first when their lives are full of promise and expectation. We leave them fixed for life, tensions resolved, so secure that there is no hint of future difficulties or uncertainties.

Anne Elliot contrasts with the earlier heroines in several ways. She is not a young lady waiting, rich with possibilities and expectations. She is a woman past the bloom of youth who has faced the probability that her chance for fulfilment in romantic love is past. Anne is beyond the age snd sense of confronting the future as Maria Bertram does: "It was a gloomy prospect, and all that she could do was to throw a mist over it, and hope when the mist cleared away, she should see something else" (MP 107). All Jane Austen's earlier heroines share to some degree Maria's habit of looking at things through a fog or of covering the truth with a fog. The novels build to the moment when their vision is clarified, to the coming of self-knowledge that makes their fulfilment possible. But Anne Elliot has nothing to learn about herself or human nature. She comes to understand, through her experience, the powers operating independently of man. Persuasion begins when the other novels would have ended had the heroines misjudged or had their planned marriages not come off. In terms of the heroines of the earlier

novels, Anne Elliot and her situation do not promise much, hold out none of the rich expectations of the former novels.

The first delight of Persuasion is the unfolding of Anne Elliot's second bloom, the unexpected increase of hope and promise, the revitalization of old possibilities. We are not "all hastening together to perfect felicity" (NA 250); the progress here is slower, more measured, but it is the slowness and measure of romance, not prudence. Anne and Wentworth achieve the emotional security of the other heroes and heroines, but theirs is not signified by geographical fixity. Their security is placed explicitly in the context of the haphazard forces of life. Jane Austen acknowledges the limitations of life here, whereas in her earlier novels she has consciously used the limited, self-contained quality of a novel to emphasize the security of conjugal love. Jane Austen makes her first acknowledgment that happiness may not be absolutely secure, makes her first suggestion that what appears to be the future for the characters beyond the time span of the novel may not be the whole reality, when she remarks at the end of Mansfield Park: "With so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune or friends, the happiness of the married cousins must appear as secure as earthly happiness can be" (MP 473). But this comment lacks weight in the context of such hard-won felicity. At the conclusion of Persuasion one finds not just a vague hint of uncertainty; the source of the uncertainty in the life of Anne and Wentworth is explicitly noted: "Anne was tenderness itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth's affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine" (P 252). We cannot, then, look on Anne's

marriage with the complacency unavoidable at the end of the other novels. Since the focus has not been upon the coming to recognize personal faults or personal possibilities, but upon those mysterious and unexpected possibilities brought about by life itself, Jane Austen is free of any need to emphasize, by isolating it from the capricious forces of life, the triumph of a marriage of sound moral value. Anne and Wentworth realize their potential for love and happiness, affirm their best possibilities, but they nevertheless inhabit a world in which happiness and security are forever to some extent at the mercy of chance and accident, which can destroy as well as bestow these gifts.

Jane Austen moved into a quite different vein when she wrote Persuasion. However more complete and realistic the earlier novels might have been had she placed them in the context of the world imaged in Persuasion, I do not think the foregrounds of those novels would have been significantly changed. Whatever the dark and changing colours of the background of human life, whatever shadows are cast over the most perfect human happiness, one derives inestimable benefit from a consciousness of the various possibilities inherent in oneself, in human nature, and in the forms comprising the world external to the self. A comprehension of the value and power of human nature, of social forms and social institutions provides light to help the human heart find its proper way.

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